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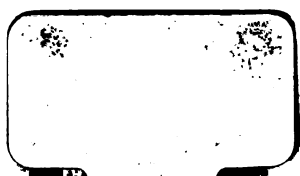
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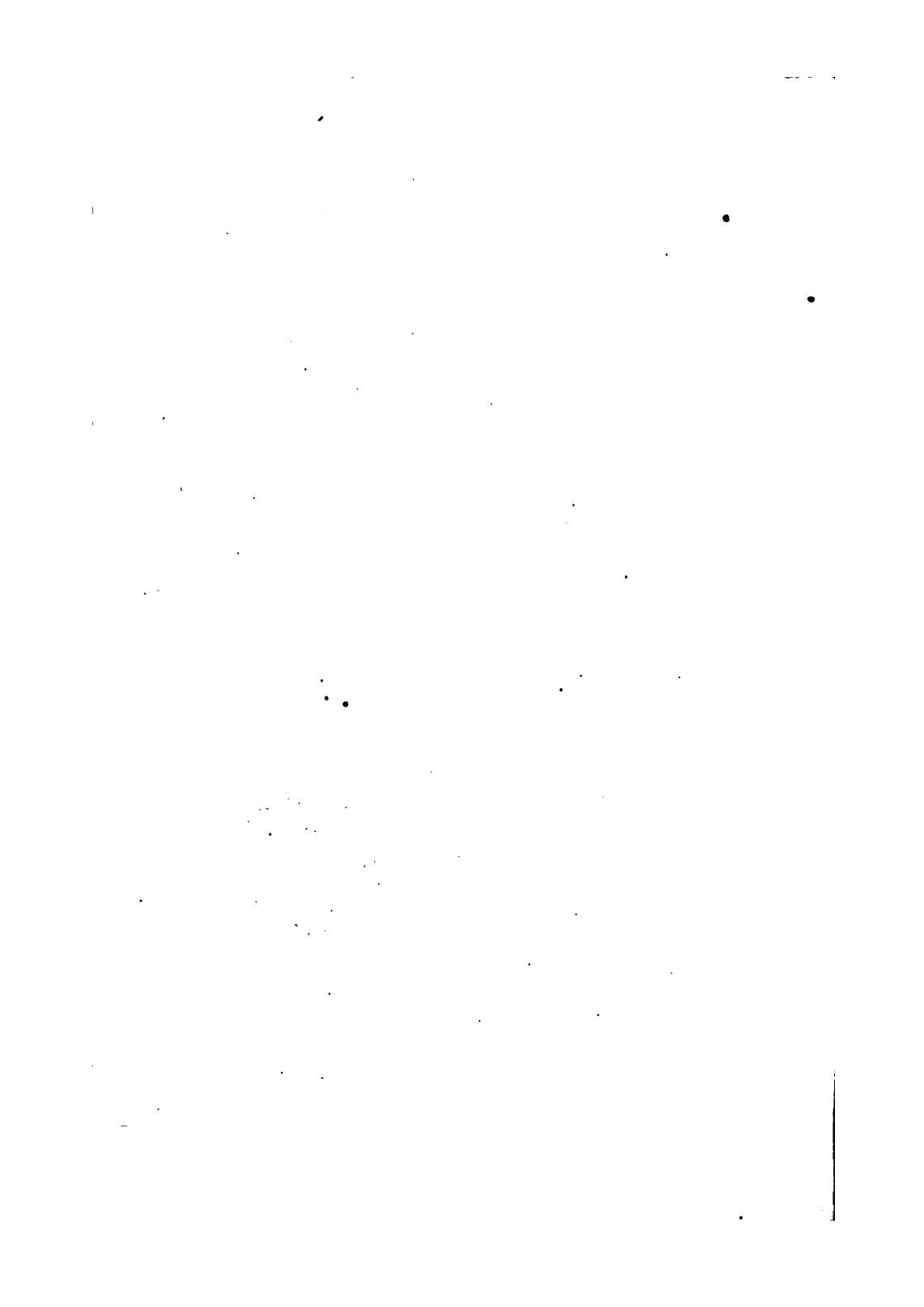




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A BOOK OF THE PLAY.



A
BOOK OF THE PLAY:

*Studies and Illustrations of Histrionic Story,
Life, and Character.*

BY
-DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF
"ART IN ENGLAND," "HOBSON'S CHOICE," "PAUL FOSTER'S DAUGHTER,"
"BANS OF MARRIAGE," ETC. ETC.

In Two Volumes.

VOL. I.



London:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON.
CROWN BUILDINGS, FLEET STREET.
1876.

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PREFACE.

THIS book is designed to serve and entertain those interested in the transactions of the Theatre—now, much more than for many years past, an object of attention in England. For Fashion, it would seem, again patronises and upholds our Stage; rival players are once more supplying society with topics of conversation, provoking debate, division, and partisanship, and none the less, but rather the more, stirring enthusiasm, and bringing down lusty peals of applause.

It will be understood that I do not pretend to set forth anew a formal and complete History of the Stage, but rather to traverse by-paths connected with the subject—to collect and record certain details and curiosities of histrionic life and character, past and present, which have escaped or seemed unworthy the notice of more ambitious and absolute chroniclers. At most I would have these pages considered as but portions of the story of the British Theatre whispered from the side-wings.

Necessarily, the work is derived from many sources, owes much to previous labours, is the result of considerable searching here and there, collation, and selection. I have endeavoured to make acknowledgment, as opportunity occurred, of the authorities I stand indebted to, for this fact or that story. But I desire to make express mention of the frequent aid I have received from Mr. J. Payne Collier's admirable "*History of English Dramatic Poetry*" (1831), containing *Annals of the Stage to the Restoration*. Mr. Collier, having enjoyed access to many public and private collections of the greatest value, has much enriched the store of information concerning our Dramatic Literature amassed by Malone, Stevens, Reed, and Chalmers. Referring to numberless published and unpublished papers, to sources both familiar and rare, Mr. Collier has been enabled, moreover, to increase in an important degree our knowledge of the Elizabethan Theatre, its manners and customs, ways and means. I feel that I owe to his archæological studies many apt quotations and illustrative passages I could scarcely have supplied from my own unassisted resources. The Rev. Mr. Geneste's ten-volume "*History of the Stage from the Restoration to 1830*," compiled for the most part from the playbills in the British Museum, I have also found a useful and trustworthy work—a lively one I cannot call it.

Let it not be supposed, however, that a shower-bath of antiquarianism is to follow hard upon this induction. While looking back at the past, the present has been borne in mind. I trust, indeed, the entertainment I have laboured to provide, may prove to be lacking neither in substance nor in variety, and that interspersed among the more solid dishes may be found a sufficiency of lighter food. I have sought both to appease in some measure the appetite of the hungry student of the subject, and to stimulate and gratify the rather palled palate of that well-known and very influential personage "the general reader," who, unable to make a genuine meal from any book, can only be persuaded to "pick" a page or two now and then. I have aimed at conciliating and contenting both those who simply "dip," and those who, so to speak, totally immerse themselves in their author.

I cannot hope that in a publication of this class I have altogether escaped inaccuracy. In dealing with a multiplicity of dates and bygone facts, I may here and there have gone astray, although always with the best intention of adhering to the right road. I must ask for leniency of judgment if any material errors of this kind shall be found to disfigure the following pages. Moreover, the indulgence of the reader is solicited in relation to certain repetitions hardly avoidable in the treat-

ment of subjects having close relation to each other. In studying a map of Middlesex, one cannot help seeing something of Surrey, Essex, Herts, &c., albeit separate charts of those counties may happen to be close at hand. Discussing one topic, others needs must be infringed upon, more or less. I should add that the chapters here assembled first sought public favour as individual papers. Their subsequent collection was always contemplated, but it was thought well to equip them as completely as possible in the first instance—it might be with a little borrowing now and then from the possessions of their neighbours. They are here reproduced in a revised, and in many instances an extended form; essential change, however, was scarcely practicable. I can only hope that what was deemed an advantage to them originally, when they stood alone, may not be reckoned gravely to their prejudice now that they present themselves ranged together in close order, shoulder to shoulder.

DUTTON COOK.

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A BOOK OF THE PLAY.

CHAPTER I.

PLAYGOERS.

THE man who, having witnessed and enjoyed the earliest performance of Thespis and his company, followed the travelling theatre of that primeval actor and manager, and attended a second and a third histrionic exhibition, has good claim to be accounted the first playgoer. For recurrence is involved in playgoing, until something of a habit is constituted. And usually, we may note, the playgoer is youthful. An old playgoer is almost a contradiction in terms. He is merely a young playgoer who has grown old. He talks of the plays and players of his youth, but he does not, in truth, visit the theatre much in his age ; and, invariably, he condemns the present, and applauds the past. Things have much degenerated and decayed, he finds ; himself among them, but of that fact he is not fully conscious. There

are no such actors now as once there were, nor such actresses. The drama has declined into a state almost past praying for. This is, of course, a very old story. "Palmy days" have always been yesterdays. Our imaginary friend, mentioned above, who was present at the earliest of stage exhibitions, probably deemed the second and third to be less excellent than the first; at any rate, he assuredly informed his friends and neighbours, who had been absent from that performance, that they had missed very much indeed, and had by no means seen Thespis at his best. Even nowadays, middle-aged playgoers, old enough to remember the late Mr. Macready, are trumped, as it were, by older playgoers, boastful of their memories of Kemble and the elder Kean. And these players, in their day and in their turn, underwent disparagement at the hands of veterans who had seen Garrick. Pope, much as he admired Garrick, yet held fast to his old faith in Betterton. From a boy he had been acquainted with Betterton. He maintained Betterton to be the best actor he had ever seen. "But I ought to tell you at the same time," he candidly admitted, "that in Betterton's time the older sort of people talked of Hart's being his superior, just as we do of Betterton's being superior to those now." So in the old-world tract, called "*Historia Histrionica*"—a dialogue upon the condition of the early stage, first published in 1699—Trueman, the veteran

Cavalier playgoer, in reply to Lovewit, who had decided that the actors of his time were far inferior to Hart, Mohun, Burt, Lacy, Clun, and Shatterel, ventures to observe: "If my fancy and memory are not partial (for men of age are apt to be over-indulgent to the thoughts of their youthful days), I dare assure you that the actors I have seen before the war—Lowin, Taylor, Pollard, and some others—were almost as far beyond Hart and his company as those were beyond these now in being." In truth, age brings with it to the playhouse recollections, regrets, and palled appetite; middle life is too much prone to criticism, too little inclined to enthusiasm, for the securing of unmixed satisfaction; but youth is endowed with the faculty of admiring exceedingly, with hopefulness, and a keen sense of enjoyment, and, above all, with very complete power of self-deception. It is the youthful playgoers who are ever the best friends of the players.

As a rule, a boy will do anything, or almost anything, to go to a theatre. His delight in the drama is extreme—it possesses and absorbs him completely. Mr. Pepys has left on record Tom Killigrew's "way of getting to see plays when he was a boy." "He would go to the 'Red Bull' (at the upper end of St. John Street, Clerkenwell), and when the man cried to the boys—'Who will go and be a devil, and he shall see the play for nothing?' then would he go in and be a devil upon the stage, and

so get to see plays." How many boys there are who would be willing, even eager, to obtain theatrical entertainment upon like terms! In one of his most delightful papers, Charles Lamb has described his first visit to a theatre. He "was not past six years old, and the play was 'Artaxerxes!' I had dabbled a little in the 'Universal History'—the ancient part of it—and here was the Court of Persia. It was being admitted to a sight of the past. I took no proper interest in the action going on, for I understood not its import, but I heard the word Darius, and I was in the midst of Daniel. All feeling was absorbed in vision. Gorgeous vests, gardens, palaces, princesses, passed before me. I knew not players. I was in Persepolis for the time, and the burning idol of their devotion almost converted me into a worshipper. I was awe-struck, and believed those significations to be something more than elemental fires. It was all enchantment and a dream. No such pleasure has since visited me but in dreams." Returning to the theatre after an interval of some years, he vainly looked for the same feelings to recur with the same occasion. He was disappointed. "At the first period I knew nothing, understood nothing, discriminated nothing. I felt all, loved all, wondered all—'was nourished I could not tell how.' I had left the temple a devotee and was returned a rationalist. The same things were there materially; but the emblem, the reference was gone! The green

curtain was no longer a veil drawn between two worlds, the unfolding of which was to bring back past ages, to present a 'royal ghost,'—but a certain quantity of green baize, which was to separate the audience for a given time from certain of their fellow men who were to come forward and pretend those parts. The lights—the orchestra lights—came up a clumsy machinery. The first ring, and the second ring, was now but a trick of the prompter's bell—which had been, like the note of the cuckoo, a phantom of a voice ; no hand seen or guessed at which ministered to its warning. The actors were men and women painted. I thought the fault was in them ; but it was in myself, and the alteration which those many centuries—of six short twelvemonths—had wrought in me." Presently, however, Lamb recovered tone, so to speak, as a playgoer. Comparison and retrospection soon yielded to the present attraction of the scene, and the theatre became to him, "upon a new stock, the most delightful of recreations."

Audiences have always been miscellaneous. Among them, not only youth and age, but rich and poor, wise and ignorant, good and bad, virtuous and vicious, have alike found representation. The gallery and the groundlings have been catered for not less than the spectators of the boxes and private rooms ; yet, upon the whole, the stage, from its earliest period has always provided entertainment of a re-

putable and wholesome kind. Even in its least commendable condition—and this, so far as England is concerned, we may judge to have been during the reign of King Charles II.—it yet possessed redeeming elements. It was never wholly bad, though it might now and then come to very near seeming so. And what it was, the audience had made it. It reflected their sentiments and opinions ; it accorded with their moods and humours ; it was their creature ; its performers were their most faithful and zealous servants.

Playgoers, it appears, were not wont to ride to the theatre in coaches until late in the reign of James I. Taylor, the water-poet, in his invective against coaches, 1623, dedicated to all grieved “with the world running on wheels,” writes : “Within our memories our nobility and gentry could ride well mounted, and sometimes walk on foot, gallantly attended with fourscore brave fellows in blue coats, which was a glory to our nation, far greater than forty of these leathern tumbrels ! Then, the name of coach was heathen Greek. Who ever saw, but upon extraordinary occasions, Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Francis Drake ride in a coach ? They made small use of coaches ; there were but few in those times ; and they were deadly foes to sloth and effeminacy. It is in the memory of many when, in the whole kingdom, there was not one ! It is a doubtful question whether the devil brought tobacco

into England in a coach, for both appeared at the same time." According to Stow, coaches were introduced here 1564, by Guiliam Boonen, who afterwards became coachman to the queen. The first he ever made was for the Earl of Rutland; but the demand rapidly increased, until there ensued a great trade in coach-making, insomuch that a bill was brought into Parliament, in 1601, to restrain the excessive use of such vehicles. Between the coachmen and the watermen there was no very cordial understanding, as the above quotation from Taylor sufficiently demonstrates. In 1613 the Thames watermen petitioned the king, that the players should not be permitted to have a theatre in London, or Middlesex, within four miles of the Thames, in order that the inhabitants might be induced, as formerly, to make use of boats in their visits to the playhouses in Southwark. Not long afterwards, sedans came into fashion, still further to the prejudice of the watermen. In the Induction to Ben Jonson's "*Cynthia's Revels*," performed in 1600, mention is made of "coaches, hobbyhorses, and foot-cloth nags," as in ordinary use. In 1631 the churchwardens and constables, on behalf of the inhabitants of Blackfriars, in a petition to Laud, then Bishop of London, prayed for the removal of the playhouse from their parish, on the score of the many inconveniences they endured as shopkeepers, "being hindered by the great recourse

to the playes, especially of coaches, from selling their commodities, and having their wares many times broken and beaten off their stalls." Further, they alleged that, owing to the great "recourse of coaches," and the narrowness of the streets, the inhabitants could not, in an afternoon, "take in any provision of beere, coales, wood, or hay;" the passage through Ludgate was many times stopped up, people "in their ordinary going" much endangered, quarrels and bloodshed occasioned, and disorderly people, towards night, gathered together under pretence of waiting for those at the plays. Christenings and burials were many times disturbed; persons of honour and quality dwelling in the parish were restrained, by the number of coaches, from going out or coming home in seasonable time, to "the prejudice of their occasions;" and it was suggested that, "if there should happen any misfortune of fire," it was not likely that any order could possibly be taken, since, owing to the number of the coaches, no speedy passage could be made for quenching the fire, to the endangering both of the parish and of the city. It does not appear that any action on the part of Laud or the Privy Council followed this curious petition.

It seems clear that the Elizabethan audiences were rather an unruly congregation. There was much cracking of nuts and consuming of pippins in the old playhouses; ale and wine were

on sale, and tobacco was freely smoked by the upper class of spectators, for it was hardly yet common to all conditions. Previous to the performance, and during its pauses, the visitors read pamphlets or copies of plays bought at the play-house-doors, and, as they drank and smoked, played at cards. In his "Gull's Horn Book," 1609, Dekker tells his hero, "before the play begins, fall to cards;" and, winning or losing, he is bidden to tear some of the cards and to throw them about, just before the entrance of the prologue. The ladies were treated to apples, and sometimes applied their lips to a tobacco-pipe. Prynne, in his "Histriomastix," 1633, states that, even in his time, ladies were occasionally "offered the tobacco-pipe" at plays. Then, as now, new plays attracted larger audiences than ordinary. Dekker observes, in his "News from Hell," 1606, "It was a comedy to see what a crowding, as if had been at a new play, there was upon the Acherontic strand." How the spectators comported themselves upon these occasions, Ben Jonson, "the Mirror of Manners," as Mr. Collier well surnames him, has described in his "The Case is Altered," acted at Blackfriars about 1599. "But the sport is, at a new play, to observe the sway and variety of opinion that passeth it. A man shall have such a confused mixture of judgment poured out in the throng there, as ridiculous as laughter itself. One says he likes not the writing; another likes not the plot; another

not the playing; and sometimes a fellow that comes not there past once in five years, at a Parliament time or so, will be as deep-mired in censuring as the best, and swear, by God's foot, he would never stir his foot to see a hundred such as that is!" The conduct of the gallants, among whom were included those who deemed themselves critics and wits, appears to have usually been of a very unseemly and offensive kind. They sat upon the stage, paying sixpence or a shilling for the hire of a stool, or reclined upon the rushes with which the boards were strewn. Their pages were in attendance to fill their pipes; and they were noted for the capriciousness and severity of their criticisms. "They have taken such a habit of dislike in all things," says Valentine, in "The Case is Altered," "that they will approve nothing, be it ever so conceited or elaborate; but sit dispersed, making faces and spitting, wagging their upright ears, and cry, 'Filthy, filthy!'" Ben Jonson had suffered much from the censure of his audiences. In "The Devil is an Ass," he describes the demeanour of a gallant occupying a seat upon the stage. Fittsdottrell says:

To day I go to the Blackfriars playhouse,
Sit in the view, salute all my acquaintance;
Rise up between the acts, let fall my cloak;
Publish a handsome man and a rich suit—
And that's a special end why we go thither.

Of the cutpurses, rogues, and evil characters of both sexes who frequented the old

theatres, abundant mention is made by the poets and satirists of the past. In this respect there can be no question that the censure which was so liberally awarded was also richly merited. Mr. Collier quotes from Edmund Gayton, an author who avowedly "wrote trite things merely to get bread to sustain him and his wife," and who published, in 1654, "Festivous Notes on the History of the renowned Don Quixote," a curious account of the behaviour of our early audiences at certain of the public theatres. "Men," it is observed, "come not to study at a playhouse, but love such expressions and passages which with ease insinuate themselves into their capacities On holidays, when sailors, watermen, shoemakers, butchers, and apprentices are at leisure, then it is good policy to amaze those violent spirits with some tearing tragedy full of fights and skirmishes the spectators frequently mounting the stage, and making a more bloody catastrophe among themselves than the players did." Occasionally, it appears, the audience compelled the actors to perform, not the drama their programmes had announced, but some other, such as "the major part of the company had a mind to : sometimes 'Tamerlane ;' sometimes 'Jugurtha ;' sometimes 'The Jew of Malta ;' and, sometimes, parts of all these ; and, at last, none of the three taking, they were forced to undress and put off their tragic habits, and conclude the day with 'The Merry Milkmaids.'"

If it so chanced that the players were refractory, then "the benches, the tiles, the lathes, the stones, oranges, apples, nuts, flew about most liberally; and as there were mechanics of all professions, everyone fell to his own trade, and dissolved a house on the instant, and made a ruin of a stately fabric. It was not then the most mimical nor fighting man could pacify; prologues nor epilogues would prevail; the Devil and the Fool [evidently two popular characters at this time] were quite out of favour; nothing but noise and tumult fills the house," &c. &c.

Concerning the dramatist of the time, upon the occasion of the first performance of his play, his anxiety, irascibility, and peculiarities generally, Ben Jonson provides sufficient information. "We are not so officiously befriended by him," says one of the characters in the Induction to "Cynthia's Revels," "as to have his presence in the tiring-house, to prompt us aloud, stamp at the bookholder [or, prompter] swear at our properties, curse the poor tireman, rail the musick out of tune, and sweat for every venial trespass we commit as some author would." While, in the Induction to his "Staple of News," Jonson has clearly portrayed himself. "Yonder he is," says Mirth, in reply to some remark touching the poet of the performance, "within—I was in the tiring-house awhile, to see the actors dressed—rolling himself up and down like a tun in the midst of them

never did vessel, or wort, or wine, work so . . . a stewed poet! . . . he doth sit like an unbraced drum, with one of his heads beaten out," &c. The dramatic poets, it may be noted, were admitted gratis to the theatres, and duly took their places among the spectators. Not a few of them were also actors. Dekker, in his "*Satiromastix*," accuses Jonson of sitting in the gallery during the performance of his own plays, distorting his countenance at every line, "to make gentlemen have an eye on him, and to make players afraid" to act their parts. A further charge is thus worded:—"Besides, you must forswear to venture on the stage, when your play is ended, and exchange courtesies and compliments with the gallants in the lords' rooms (or boxes), to make all the house rise up in arms, and cry—'That's Horace! that's he! that's he! that's he that purges humours and diseases!'"

Jonson makes frequent complaint of the growing fastidiousness of his audience, and nearly fifty years later, the same charge against the public is repeated by Davenant, in the Prologue to his "*Unfortunate Lovers*." He tells the spectators that they expect to have in two hours ten times more wit than was allowed their silly ancestors in twenty years, who

to the theatre would come,
Ere they had dined, to take up the best room;
There sit on benches not adorned with mats,
And graciously did vail their high-crowned hats

To every half-dressed player, as he still
Through the hangings peeped to see how the house did fill.
Good easy judging souls ! with what delight
They would expect a jig or target fight ;
A furious tale of Troy, which they ne'er thought
Was weakly written so 'twere strongly fought.

As to the playgoers of the Restoration we have abundant information from the poet Dryden, and the diarist Pepys. For some eighteen years the theatres had been absolutely closed, and during that interval very great changes had occurred. England, under Charles II., seemed as a new and different country to the England of preceding monarchs. The restored king and his courtiers brought with them from their exile in France strange manners, and customs, and tastes. The theatre they favoured was scarcely the theatre that had flourished in England before the Civil War. Dryden reminds the spectators, in one of his prologues—

You now have habits, dances, scenes, and rhymes,
High language often, aye, and sense sometimes.

There was an end of dramatic poetry, as it was understood under Elizabeth. Blank verse had expired or swooned away, never again to be wholly reanimated. Fantastic tragedies in rhyme, after the French pattern, became the vogue ; and absolute translations from the French and Spanish for the first time occupied the English stage. Shakespeare and his colleagues had converted existing materials to dramatic uses, but not as did the playwrights of

the Restoration. In the Epilogue to the comedy of "An Evening's Love; or, The Mock Astrologer," borrowed from "Le Feint Astrologue" of the younger Corneille, Dryden, the adapter of the play, makes jesting defence of the system of adaptation. The critics are described as conferring together in the pit on the subject of the performance :

They kept a fearful stir
In whispering that he stole the Astrologer :
And said, betwixt a French and English plot,
He eased his half-tired muse on pace and trot.
Up starts a Monsieur, new come o'er, and warm
In the French stoop and pull-back of the arm,
"Morbleu," dit-il, and cocks, "I am a rogue,
But he has quite spoiled the 'Feigned Astrologue !'"

The poet is supposed to make excuse :

He neither swore, nor stormed, as poets do,
But, most unlike an author, vowed 'twas true ;
Yet said he used the French like enemies,
And did not steal their plots but made them prize.

Dryden concludes with a sort of apology for his own productiveness, and the necessity of borrowing that it involved :

He still must write, and banquier-like, each day
Accept new bills, and he must break or pay.
When through his hands such sums must yearly run,
You cannot think the stock is all his own.

Pepys, who, born in 1633, must have had experiences of youthful playgoing before the great Civil War, finds evidence "afterwards of the vanity and prodigality of the age" in the nightly company of citizens, 'prentices, and others attending the theatre, and holds it a

grievance that there should be so many "mean people" in the pit at two shillings and sixpence apiece. For several years, he mentions, he had gone no higher than the twelvepenny, and then the eighteenpenny places. Oftentimes, however, the king and his court, the Duke and Duchess of York, and the young Duke of Monmouth, were to be seen in the boxes. In 1662 Charles's consort, Catherine, was first exhibited to the English public at the Cockpit Theatre in Drury Lane, when Shirley's "Cardinal" was represented. Then there are accounts of scandals and indecorums in the theatre. Evelyn reprovingly speaks of the public theatres being abused to an "atheistical liberty." Nell Gwynne is in front of the curtain prattling with the fops, lounging across and leaning over them, and conducting herself saucily and impudently enough. Moll Davis is in one box, and my Lady Castlemaine, with the king, in another. Moll makes eyes at the king, and he at her. My Lady Castlemaine detects the interchange of glances, and "when she saw Moll Davies she looked like fire, which troubled me," said Mr. Pepys, who, to do him justice, was often needlessly troubled about matters with which, in truth, he had very little concern. There were brawls in the theatre, and tipsiness and much license generally. In 1682 two gentlemen, disagreeing in the pit, drew their swords and climbed to the stage. There they fought furiously until a sudden

sword-thrust stretched one of the combatants upon the boards. The wound was not mortal, however, and the duellists, after a brief confinement by order of the authorities, were duly set at liberty.

The fop of the Restoration was a different creature to the Elizabethan gallant. Etherege satirised him in his "Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter," Dryden supplying the comedy with an epilogue, in which he fully described certain of the prevailing follies of the time in regard to dress and manners. The audience are informed that

None Sir Fopling him or him can call,
He's knight of the shire and represents you all !
From each he meets he culls whate'er he can ;
Legion's his name, a people in a man.

* * * *

His various modes from various fathers follow ;
One taught the toss, and one the new French wallow ;
His sword-knot this, his cravat that designed ;
And this the yard-long snake he twirls behind.
From one the sacred periwig he gained,
Which wind ne'er blew nor touch of hat profaned.
Another's diving bow he did adore,
Which, with a shog, casts all the hair before,
Till he with full decorum brings it back,
And rises with a water-spaniel shake.

Upon another occasion the poet writes :

But only fools, and they of vast estate,
The extremity of modes will imitate,
The dangling knee-fringe and the bib-cravat.

While the fops were thus equipped, the ladies

wore vizard-masks, and upon the appearance of one of these in the pit—

Straight every man who thinks himself a wit,
Perks up, and managing his comb with grace,
With his white wig sets off his nut-brown face.

For it was the fashion of the gentlemen to toy with their soaring, large-curved periwigs, smoothing them with a comb. Between the fops and the ladies goodwill did not always prevail. The former were, no doubt, addicted to gross impertinence in their conversation.

Fop Corner now is free from civil war,
White wig and vizard-mask no longer jar,
France and the fleet have swept the town so clear.

So Dryden "prologued" in 1672, attributing the absence of "all our braves and all our wits" to the war which England, in conjunction with France, had undertaken against the Dutch.

Queen Anne, in 1704, expressly ordered that "no woman should be allowed, or presume to wear, a vizard-mask in either of the theatres." At the same time it was commanded that no person, of what quality soever, should presume to go behind the scenes, or come upon the stage, either before or during the acting of any play; and that no person should come into either house without paying the price established for their respective places. And the disobedient were publicly warned that they would be proceeded against, as "contemners of

our royal authority and disturbers of the public peace."

These royal commands were not very implicitly obeyed. Vizard-masks may have been discarded promptly, but there was much crowding, behind the scenes and upon the stage, of persons of quality for many years after. Garrick, in 1762, once and for ever, succeeded in clearing the boards of the unruly mob of spectators, and secured room to move upon the scene for himself and his company. But it was only by enlarging his theatre, and in such wise increasing the number of seats available for spectators in the auditory of the house, that he was enabled to effect this reform. From that date the playgoers of the past grew more and more like the playgoers of the present, until the flight of time rendered distinction between them no longer possible, and merged yesterday in to-day. There must have been a very important change in the aspect of the house, however, when hair powder went out of fashion in 1795; when swords ceased to be worn—for, of course, then there could be no more rising of the pit to slash the curtain and scenery, to prick the performers, and to lunge at the mirrors and decorations; when gold and silver lace vanished from coats and waistcoats, silks and velvets gave place to broadcloth and pantaloons; and when, afterwards, trousers covered those nether limbs which had before, and for so long a period, been exhibited in silk stockings.

Yet these alterations were accomplished gradually, no doubt. All was not done in a single night. Fashion makes first one convert, and then another, and so on, until all are numbered among her followers and wear the livery she has prescribed. Garrick's opinion of those playgoers of his time, whom he at last banished from his stage, may be gathered from the dialogue between *Æsop* and the Fine Gentleman, in his farce of "*Lethe*." *Æsop* inquires, "How do you spend your evening, sir?" "I dress in the evening," says the Fine Gentleman, "and go generally behind the scenes of both play-houses; not, you may imagine, to be diverted with the play, but to intrigue and show myself. I stand upon the stage, talk loud, and stare about, which confounds the actors and disturbs the audience. Upon which the galleries, who hate the appearance of one of us, begin to hiss, and cry, 'Off, off!' while I, undaunted, stamp my foot so; loll with my shoulder thus; take snuff with my right hand, and smile scornfully, thus. This exasperates the savages, and they attack us with volleys of sucked oranges and half-eaten pippins." "And you retire?" "Without doubt, if I am sober; for orange will stain silk, and an apple may disfigure a feature."

In the Italian opera-houses of London there have long prevailed managerial ordinances touching the style of dress to be assumed by the patrons of those establishments; the British playgoer, however, attending histrionic per-

formances in his native tongue has been left to his own devices in that respect. It cannot be said that much harm has resulted from the full liberty permitted him, or that neglect on his part has impaired the generally attractive aspect of our theatrical auditories. Nevertheless, occasional eccentricity has been forthcoming, if only to incur rebuke. We may cite an instance or two.

In December, 1738, the editor of the *London Evening Post* was thus addressed by a correspondent assuming the character of Miss Townley :—

“I am a young woman of fashion who love plays, and should be glad to frequent them as an agreeable and instructive entertainment, but am debarred that diversion by my relations upon account of a sort of people who now fill or rather infest the boxes. I went the other night to the play with an aunt of mine, a well-bred woman of the last age, though a little formal. When we sat down in the front boxes we found ourselves surrounded by a parcel of the strangest fellows that ever I saw in my life ; some of them had those loose kind of great coats on which I have heard called *wrap-rascals*, with gold-laced hats, slouched in humble imitation of *stage-coachmen* ; others aspired at being *grooms*, and had dirty boots and spurs, with black caps on, and long whips in their hands ; a third sort wore scanty frocks,

with little, shabby hats, put on one side, and clubs in their hands. My aunt whispered me that she never saw such a set of slovenly, unmannerly footmen sent to keep places in her life, when, to her great surprise, she saw those fellows, at the end of the act, pay the box-keeper for their places."

In 1730 the "Universal Spectator" notes : "The wearing of swords, at the Court end of the town, is, by many polite young gentlemen, laid aside ; and instead thereof they carry large oak sticks, with great heads and ugly faces carved thereon."

Elliston was, in 1827, lessee and manager of the Surrey Theatre. "Quite an opera pit," he said to Charles Lamb, conducting him over the benches of that establishment—"the last retreat of and recess of his every-day waning grandeur." The following letter—the authenticity of which seems to be vouched for by the actor's biographer—supplies a different view of the Surrey audience of that date :—

"August 10th, 1827.

"SIR,—I really must beg to call your attention to a most abominable nuisance which exists in your house, and which is, in a great measure, the cause of the minor theatres not holding the rank they should amongst play-houses. I mean the admission of *sweeps* into the theatre in the very dress in which they

climb chimneys. This not only incommodes ladies and gentlemen by the obnoxious odour arising from their attire, but these sweeps take up twice the room of other people because the ladies, in particular, object to their clothes being soiled by such unpleasant neighbours. I have, with my wife, been much in the habit of visiting the Surrey Theatre, and on three occasions we have been annoyed by these sweeps. People will not go, sir, where sweeps are; and you will find, sooner or later, these gentlemen will have the whole theatre to themselves unless an alteration be made. I own, at some theatres, the managers are too particular in dress; those days are passed, and the public have a right to go to theatrical entertainments in their morning costumes; but this ought not to include the sweeps. It is not a week ago since a lady in a nice white gown sat down on the very spot which a nasty sweep had just quitted, and, when she got up, the sight was most horrible, for she was a very heavy lady and had laughed a good deal during the performance; but it was no laughing matter to her when she got home. I hope I have said quite enough, and am your

“WELL-WISHER.

“R. W. Elliston, Esq.”

No doubt some reform followed upon this urgent complaint.

Regulations as to dress are peculiar to our

Italian opera-houses, are unknown, as Mr. Sutherland Edwards writes in his "History of the Opera," "even in St. Petersburg and Moscow where, as the theatres are directed by the Imperial Government, one might expect to find a more despotic code of laws in force than in a country like England. When an Englishman goes to a morning or evening concert, he does not present himself in the attire of a scavenger, and there is no reason for supposing that he would appear in any unbecoming garb if liberty of dress were permitted to him at the opera. . . . If the check-takers are empowered to inspect and decide as to the propriety of the cut and colour of clothes, why should they not also be allowed to examine the texture? On the same principle, too, the cleanliness of opera-goers ought to be inquired into. No one whose hair is not properly brushed should be permitted to enter the stalls, and visitors to the pit should be compelled to show their nails."

There have been, from time to time, protests, unavailing, however, against the tyranny of the opera-managers. In his "Seven Years of the King's Theatre" (1828), Mr. Ebers publishes the remonstrance of a gentleman refused admission to the opera on the score of his imperfect costume, much to his amazement; "for," he writes, "I was dressed in a superfine blue coat with gold buttons, white waistcoat, fashionable tight drab pantaloons, white

silk stockings, and dress shoes, *all worn but once, a few days before, at a dress concert, at the 'Crown and Anchor' Tavern.*" He proceeds to express his indignation at the idea of the manager presuming to enact sumptuary laws without the intervention of the Legislature, and adds threats of legal proceedings and an appeal to a British jury. "I have mixed," he continues, "too much in genteel society not to know that black breeches, or pantaloons, with black silk stockings, is a very prevailing full dress, and why is it so? Because it is convenient and economical, *for you can wear a pair of white silk stockings once without washing, and a pair of black is frequently worn for weeks without ablution.* P.S.—I have no objection to submit an inspection of my dress of the evening in question to you or any competent person you may appoint." Of this offer it would seem that Mr. Ebers did not avail himself.

CHAPTER II.

THE MASTER OF THE REVELS.

LORDS of Misrule and Abbots of Unreason had long presided over the Yuletide festivities of old England ; in addition to these functionaries King Henry VIII. nominated a Master and Yeoman of the Revels to act as the subordinates of his Lord Chamberlain, and expressly to provide and supervise the general entertainments and pastimes of the court. These had already been ordered and established after a manner that seemed extravagant by contrast with the economical tastes of the preceding sovereign, who yet had not shown indifference to the attractions of poetry, music, and the stage. But Henry VIII., according to the testimony of Hall, was a proficient, not less in arms than in arts ; he exercised himself daily in shooting, singing, dancing, wrestling, “ casting of the bar, playing at the recorders, flute, virginals, and in setting of songs, making of ballettes ; and did set two goodly masses, every

in them five parts, which were sung oftentimes in his chapel, and afterwards in divers other places." Early in his reign he appointed Richard Gibson, one of his father's company of players, to be "yeoman tailor to the king," and subsequently "serjeant-at-arms and of the tents and revels;" and in 1546 he granted a patent to Sir Thomas Cawarden, conferring upon him the office of "*Magistri Jocorum, Revellorum et Mascorum, omnium et singulorum nostrorum, vulgariter nuncupatorum Revells et Masks*," with a salary of £10 sterling—a very modest stipend; but then Sir Thomas enjoyed other emoluments from his situation as one of the gentlemen of the privy chamber. The Yeoman of the Revels, who assisted the Master and probably discharged the chief duties of his office, received an annual allowance of £9 2s. 6d.; and eight players of interludes were awarded incomes of £3 6s. 8d. To these remote appointments of "yeoman tailor," and "Master of the Revels," is due that office of "Licenser of Plays," which, strange to say, is extant and even flourishing in the present year of grace.

As Chalmers has pointed out, however, in his "*Apology for the Believers in the Shakespearian Papers*," the King's Chamberlain, or, as he was styled in all formal proceedings of the time, *Camerarius Hospitii*, had the government and superintendence of the king's hunting and revels, of the comedians musicians, and

other royal servants; and was, by virtue of the original constitution of his office, the real Master of the Revels, "the great director of the sports of the court by night as well as of the sports of the field by day." Still the odium of his office, especially in its relation to plays and players, could not but attach to his subordinates and deputies the Masters of the Revels; "tasteless and officious tyrants," as Gifford describes them in a note to Ben Jonson's "Alchemist," "who acted with little discrimination, and were always more ready to prove their authority than their judgment, the most hateful of them all being Sir Henry Herbert," appointed by Charles I. to an office which naturally expired when the Puritans suppressed the stage and did their utmost to exterminate the players. At the Restoration, however, Herbert resumed his duties; but he found, as Chalmers relates, "that the recent times had given men new habits of reasoning, notions of privileges, and propensities to resistance. He applied to the courts of justice for redress; but the verdicts of judges were contradictory; he appealed to the ruler of the state, but without receiving redress or exciting sympathy: like other disputed jurisdictions, the authority of the Master of the Revels continued to be oppressive till the Revolution taught new lessons to all parties."

It is to be observed, however, that the early severities and arbitrary caprices to which the

players were subjected, were not attributable solely to the action of the Masters of the Revels. The Privy Council was constant in its interference with the affairs of the theatre. A suspicion was for a long time rife that the dramatic representations of the sixteenth century touched upon matters of religion or points of doctrine, and oftentimes contained matters "tending to sedition and to the contempt of sundry good orders and laws." Proclamations were from time to time issued inhibiting the players and forbidding the representation of plays and interludes. In 1551 even the actors attached to the households of noblemen were not allowed to perform without special leave from the Privy Council ; and the authorities of Gray's Inn, once famous for its dramatic representations, expressly ordered that there should be "no comedies called interludes in this house out of term time, but when the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord is solemnly observed." Upon the accession of Queen Mary in 1553 dramatic representations, whether or not touching upon points of religious doctrine, appear to have been forbidden for a period of two years. In 1556 the Star Chamber issued orders, addressed to the justices of the peace of every county in the kingdom, with instructions that they should be rigorously enforced, forbidding the representation of dramatic productions of all kinds. Still, in Mary's reign, certain miracle plays, designed to incul-

cate and enforce the tenets of the Roman Catholic religion, were now and then encouraged by the public authorities ; and in 1557 the Queen sanctioned various sports and pageants of a dramatic kind, apparently for the entertainment of King Philip then arrived from Flanders, and of the Russian ambassador who had reached England a short time before.

The players had for a long while few temptations to resist authority, whether rightfully or wrongfully exercised. Sufferance was the badge of their tribe. They felt constrained to submit without question or repining, when loud-toned commands were addressed to them, dreading lest worse things should come about. The gaol and the whipping-post seemed to be always immediate possibilities in connection with their calling. It was a sort of satisfaction to them, at last, to find themselves governed by so distinguished a personage as the Lord Chamberlain, or even by his inferior officer the Master of the Revels. It was true that he might, as he often did, deal with them absurdly and severely ; but even in this abuse of his power there was valuable recognition of their profession—it became invested with a measure of lawfulness, otherwise often denied it by common opinion. How it chanced that a member of the royal household ruled not only the dramatic representations of the court, but controlled, arbitrarily enough, plays and players generally, no one appeared to know, or

thought it worth while to inquire. As Colley Cibber writes: "Though in all the letters patent for acting plays, &c., since King Charles I.'s time, there has been no mention of the Lord Chamberlain, or of any subordination to his command or authority, yet it was still taken for granted that no letters patent, by the bare omission of such a great officer's name, could have superseded or taken out of his hands that power which time out of mind he always had exercised over the theatre. But as the truth of the question seemed to be wrapt in a great deal of obscurity in the old laws, made in former reigns, relating to players, &c., it may be no wonder that the best companies of actors should be desirous of taking shelter under the visible power of a Lord Chamberlain, who, they knew, had at his pleasure favoured and protected, or borne hard upon them; but be all this as it may, a Lord Chamberlain, from whencesoever his power might be derived, had, till of later years, had always an implicit obedience paid to it."

Among the duties undertaken by the Lord Chamberlain was the licensing or refusing new plays, with the suppression of such portions of them as he might deem objectionable; which province was assigned to his inferior, the Master of the Revels. This, be it understood, was long before the passing of the Licensing Act of 1737, which, indeed, although it gave legal sanction to the power of the Lord Chamberlain, did

not really invest him with much more power than he had often before exercised. Even in Charles II.'s time, the representation of "The Maid's Tragedy," of Beaumont and Fletcher, had been forbidden by an order from the Lord Chamberlain. It was conjectured that "the killing of the king in that play, while the tragical death of King Charles I. was then so fresh in people's memory, was an object too horribly impious for a public entertainment;" and, accordingly, the courtly poet Waller occupied himself in altering the catastrophe of the story, so as to save the life of the king. Another opinion prevailed, to the effect that the murder accomplished by the heroine Evadne offered "a dangerous example to other Evadnes then shining at court in the same rank of royal distinction." In the same reign also, Nat Lee's tragedy of "Lucius Junius Brutus," "was silenced after three performances;" it being objected that the plan and sentiments of it had too boldly vindicated, and might inflame, Republican sentiments. A prologue, by Dryden, to "The Prophetess," was prohibited, on account of certain "familiar metaphorical sneers at the Revolution" it was supposed to contain, at a time when King William was prosecuting the war in Ireland. Bank's tragedy of "Mary, Queen of Scotland" was withheld from the stage for twenty years, owing to "the profound penetration of the Master of the Revels, who saw political spectres in it that never appeared

in the presentation." From Cibber's version of "Richard III.," the first act was wholly expunged, lest "the distresses of King Henry VI., who is killed by Richard in the first act, should put weak people too much in mind of King James, then living in France." In vain did Cibber petition the Master of the Revels "for the small indulgence of a speech or two, that the other four acts might limp on with a little less absurdity. No! He had not leisure to consider what might be separately inoffensive!" So, too, some eight years before the passing of the Licensing Act, Gay's ballad opera of "Polly," designed as a sequel to "The Beggar's Opera," incurred the displeasure of the Chamberlain, and was denied the honours of representation.

Nor was it only on political grounds that the Lord Chamberlain or the Master of the Revels exercised his power. The "View of the Stage," published by the nonjuring clergyman, Jeremy Collier, in 1697, first drew public attention to the immorality and profanity of the dramatic writers of that period. The diatribes and rebukes of Collier, if here and there a trifle overstrained, were certainly, for the most part, provoked by the nature of the case, and were justified by the result. Even Cibber, who had been cited as one of the offenders, admits that "his calling our dramatic writers to this strict account had a very wholesome effect upon those who wrote after this time. They were now a great deal more upon their guard . . . and,

by degrees, the fair sex came again to fill the boxes on the first day of a new comedy, without fear or censure." For some time, it seems, the ladies had been afraid of venturing "bare-faced" to a new comedy, till they had been assured that they could do it without risk of affront; "or if," as Cibber says, "their curiosity was too strong for their patience, they took care, at least, to save appearances, and rarely came upon the first days of acting but in masks, then daily worn and admitted in the pit, the side-boxes, and gallery." This reform of the drama, it is to be observed, was really effected, not by the agency of the Chamberlain or any other court official, but by force of the just criticism, strenuously delivered, of a private individual. But now, following the example of Collier, the Master of the Revels, in his turn, insisted upon amendment in this matter, and oftentimes forbade the performance of whole scenes that he judged to be vicious or immoral. He had constituted himself a *Censor Morum*; a character in which the modern Licenser of Plays still commends himself to our notice.

Moreover, the Chamberlain had arrogated to himself the right of interfering in dramatic affairs upon all occasions that he judged fitting. Upon his authority the theatres were closed at any moment, even for a period of six weeks, in the case of the death of the sovereign. If any disputes occurred between managers and actors, even in relation to so small a matter as the

privileges of the latter, the Chamberlain interfered to arrange the difficulty according to his own notion of justice. No actor could quit the company of one patent theatre, to join the forces of the other, without the permission of the Chamberlain, in addition to the formal discharge of his manager. Powell, the actor, even suffered imprisonment on this account, although it was thought as well, after a day or two, to abandon the proceedings that had been taken against him. "Upon this occasion," says Cibber, with a mysterious air, and in very involved terms, "behind the scenes at Drury Lane, a person of great quality, in my hearing, inquiring of Powell into the nature of his offence . . . told him, that if he had patience, or spirit enough to have staid in his confinement till he had given him notice of it, he would have found him a handsomer way of coming out of it!" Of the same actor, Powell, it is recorded that he once, at Will's Coffee House, "in a dispute about playhouse affairs, struck a gentleman whose family had been some time masters of it." A complaint of the actor's violence was lodged at the Chamberlain's office, and Powell having a part in the play announced for performance upon the following day, an order was sent to silence the whole company, and to close the theatre, although it was admitted that the managers had been without cognisance of their actor's misconduct! "However," Cibber narrates, "this order was obeyed, and remained

in force for two or three days, till the same authority was pleased, or advised, to revoke it. From the measures this injured gentleman took for his redress, it may be judged how far it was taken for granted that a Lord Chamberlain had an absolute power over the theatre." An attempt, however, upon the authority of the Chamberlain to imprison Dogget, the actor, for breach of his engagement with the patentees of Drury Lane Theatre, met with signal discomfiture. Dogget forthwith applied to the Lord Chief Justice Holt for his discharge under the Habeas Corpus Act, and readily obtained it, with, it may be gathered, liberal compensation for the violence to which he had been subjected.

The proceedings of the Lord Chamberlain had, indeed, become most oppressive. Early in 1720, the Duke of Newcastle, then Lord Chamberlain, took upon himself to close Drury Lane Theatre. Steele, then one of the patentees, addressed the public upon the subject. He had lived in friendship with the duke; he owed his seat in Parliament to the duke's influence. He commenced with saying, "The injury which I have received, great as it is, has nothing in it so painful as that it comes from whence it does. When I complained of it in a private letter to the Chamberlain, he was pleased to send his secretary to me with a message to forbid me writing, speaking, corresponding, or applying to him in any manner

whatsoever. Since he has been pleased to send an English gentleman a banishment from his person and counsels in a style thus royal, I doubt not but that the reader will justify me in the method I take to explain this matter to the town." Steele could obtain no redress, however. He was virtually dispossessed of his rights as patentee. He estimated his loss at nine thousand eight hundred pounds, and concluded his statement of the case with the words: "But it is apparent the King is grossly and shamelessly injured . . . I never did one act to provoke this attempt, nor does the Chamberlain pretend to assign any direct reason of forfeiture, but openly and wittingly declares that he will ruin Steele. . . . The Lord Chamberlain and many others may, perhaps, have done more for the House of Hanover than I have, but I am the only man in his majesty's dominions, who did all he could." For some months Steele was replaced by other patentees, of whom Cibber was one, more submissive to "the lawful monarch of the stage," as Dennis designated him; but in 1721, upon the intervention of Walpole, Steele was restored to his privileges. It is not clear, however, that he took any legal measures to obtain compensation for the wrong done him. Cibber is silent upon the subject; because, it has been suggested, the Chamberlain had been instrumental in obtaining him the appointment of poet laureate, which could hardly have de-

volved upon him in right of his poetic qualifications.

Nevertheless Cibber had been active in organising a form of opposition to the authority of the Chamberlain and the Master of the Revels, which, although it seemed of a trifling kind, had yet its importance. For it turned upon the question of fees. The holders of the patents considered themselves sole judges of the plays proper to be acted in their theatre. The Master of the Revels claimed his fee of forty shillings for each play produced. The managers, it seems, were at liberty to represent new plays without consulting him, and to spare him the trouble of reading the same—provided always they paid him his fees. But these they now thought it expedient to withhold from him. Cibber was deputed to attend the Master of the Revels, and to inquire into the justice of his demand, with full powers to settle the dispute amicably. Charles Killigrew at this time filled the office, having succeeded his father, Thomas, who had obtained the appointment of Master of the Revels upon the death of Sir Henry Herbert in 1673. Killigrew could produce no warrant for his demand. Cibber concluded with telling him that “as his pretensions were not backed with any visible instrument of right, and as his strongest plea was custom, the managers could not so far extend their complaisance as to continue the payment of fees upon so slender a claim to.

them. From that time neither their plays nor his fees gave either party any further trouble." In 1725 Killigrew was succeeded as Master of the Revels by Charles Henry Lea, who for some years continued to exercise "such authority as was not opposed, and received such fees as he could find the managers willing to pay."

The first step towards legislation in regard to the theatres and the licensing of plays was made in 1734, when Sir John Barnard moved the House of Commons "for leave to bring in a bill for restraining the number of houses for playing of interludes and for the better regulating common players of interludes." It was represented that great mischief had been done to the city of London by the playhouses: youth had been corrupted, vice encouraged, trade and industry prejudiced. Already the number of theatres in London was double that of Paris. In addition to the opera-house, the French playhouse in the Haymarket, and the theatres in Covent Garden, Drury Lane, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Goodman's Fields, there was now a project to erect a new playhouse in St. Martin's-le-Grand. It was no less surprising than shameful to see so great a change in the temper and inclination of the British people; "we now exceeded in levity even the French themselves, from whom we learned these and many other ridiculous customs, as much unsuitable to the mien and manners of an Englishman or a Scot, as they

were agreeable to the air and levity of a Monsieur." Moreover, it was remarked that, to the amazement and indignation of all Europe, Italian singers received here "set salaries equal to those of the Lords of the Treasury and Judges of England!" The bill was duly brought in, but was afterwards dropped, "on account of a clause offered to be inserted . . . for enlarging the power of the Lord Chamberlain with respect to the licensing of plays." It is curious to find that Tony Aston, a popular comedian of the time, who had been bred an attorney, was, upon his own petition, permitted to deliver a speech in the House of Commons against Sir John Barnard's bill.

But two years later the measure was substantially passed into law. The theatres had certainly given, in the meantime, serious provocation to the authorities. The power of the Chamberlain and the Master of the Revels had been derided. Playhouses were opened and plays produced without any kind of license. At the Haymarket, under the management of Fielding, who styled his actors "The Great Mogul's Comedians," the bills announcing that they had "dropped from the clouds" (in mockery, probably, of "His Majesty's Servants" at Drury Lane, or of another troop describing themselves as "The Comedians of His Majesty's Revels"), the plays produced had been in the nature of political lampoons. Walpole and

his arts of government were openly satirised, Fielding having no particular desire to spare the prime minister, whose patronage he had vainly solicited. In the play entitled "Pasquin, a Dramatic Satire on the Times; being the rehearsal of two plays, viz., a Comedy, called *The Election*, and a Tragedy, called *The Life and Death of Common Sense*," the satire was chiefly aimed at the electoral corruptions of the age, the abuses prevailing in the learned professions, and the servility of placemen who derided public virtue, and denied the existence of political honesty. Pasquin, it may be noted, was received with extraordinary favour, enjoyed a run of fifty nights, and proved a source of both fame and profit to its author. But the play of "*The Historical Register of 1736*," produced in the spring of 1737, contained allusions of a more pointed and personal kind, and gravely offended the government. Indeed, the result could hardly have been otherwise. Walpole himself was brought upon the stage, and under the name of Quidam violently caricatured. He was exhibited silencing noisy patriots with bribes, and then joining with them in a dance—the proceedings being explained by Medley, another of the characters, supposed to be an author: "Sir, every one of these patriots has a hole in his pocket, as Mr. Quidam the fiddler there knows; so that he intends to make them dance till all the money has fallen through, which he will pick up again, and so not lose

a halfpenny by his generosity!" The play, indeed, abounded in satire of the boldest kind, in witty and unsparing invective; as the biographer of Fielding acknowledges, there was much in the work "well calculated both to offend and alarm a wary minister of state." Soon both Pasquin and the "Historical Register" were brought under the notice of the Cabinet. Walpole felt "that it would be inexpedient to allow the stage to become the vehicle of anti-ministerial abuse." The Licensing Act was resolved upon.

The new measure was not avowedly aimed at Fielding, however. It was preceded by incidents of rather a suspicious kind. Gifford, the manager of the Goodman's Fields theatre, professing to have received from some anonymous writer a play of singular scurrility, carried the work to the prime minister. The obsequious manager was rewarded with one thousand pounds for his patriotic conduct, and the libellous nature of the play he had surrendered was made the excuse for the legislation that ensued. It was freely observed at the time, however, that Gifford had profited more by suppressing the play than he could possibly have gained by representing it, and that there was something more than natural in the appositeness of his receipt of it. If honest, it was suggested that he had been trapped by a government spy, who had sent him the play, solely that he might deal with

it as he did ; but it was rather assumed that he had dishonestly curried favour with the authorities, and sold himself for treasury gold. The play in question was never acted or printed ; nor was the name of the author, or of the person from whom the manager professed to have received it, ever disclosed. Horace Walpole, indeed, boldly ascribed it to Fielding, and asserted that he had discovered among his father's papers an imperfect copy of the play. But the statement has not obtained much acceptance.

The ministry hurried on their Licensing Bill. It was entitled "An act to explain and amend so much of an act made in the twelfth year of Queen Anne, entitled 'An act for reducing the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagrants, into one act of parliament ; and for the more effectual punishing such rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, and vagrants, and sending them whither they ought to be sent,' as relates to common players of interludes." But its chief object—undisclosed by its title, was the enactment that, for the future, every dramatic piece, including prologues and epilogues, should, previous to performance, receive the license of the Lord Chamberlain, and that, without his permission, no London theatre, unprotected by a patent, should open its doors. Read a first time on the 24th of May, 1737, the bill was passed through both Houses with such despatch that

it received the royal assent on the 8th of June following. It was opposed in the House of Commons by Mr. Pulteney, and in the House of Lords by the Earl of Chesterfield, whose impressive speech on the occasion is one of the few specimens that survive of the parliamentary eloquence of the period. With the passing of the Licensing Act, Fielding's career as manager and dramatist was brought to a close. He was constrained to devote himself to the study of law and, subsequently to the production of novels. And with the passing of the Licensing Act terminated the existence of the Master of the Revels; the Act, indeed, made no mention of him, ignored him altogether. He survived, however, under another name—still as the Chamberlain's subordinate and deputy. Thenceforward he was known as the Licensor of Playhouses and Examiner of Plays.

CHAPTER III.

THE LICENSER OF PLAYHOUSES.

THE Act of 1737 for licensing plays, play-houses, and players, and legalising the power the Lord Chamberlain had long been accustomed to exercise, although readily passed by both Houses of Parliament, gave great offence to the public. The Abbé Le Blanc, who was visiting England at this period, describes the new law as provoking an "universal murmur in the nation." It was openly complained of in the newspapers; at the coffee-houses it was denounced as unjust and "contrary to the liberties of the people of England." Fear prevailed that the freedom of the press would next be invaded. In the House of Lords. Chesterfield had stigmatised the measure both as an encroachment on liberty and an attack on property. "Wit, my lords," he said, "is a sort of property. It is the property of those that have it, and too often the only property they have to depend on. It is, indeed, but a

precarious dependence. Thank God, we, my lords, have a dependence of another kind. We have a much less precarious support, and, therefore, cannot feel the inconveniences of the bill now before us; but it is our duty to encourage and protect wit, whosoever's property it may be. . . . I must own I cannot easily agree to the laying of a tax upon wit; but by this bill it is to be heavily taxed—it is to be excised; for if this bill passes, it cannot be retailed in a proper way without a permit; and the Lord Chamberlain is to have the honour of being chief gauger, supervisor, commissioner, judge and jury." At this time, however, it is to be noted that parliamentary reporting was forbidden by both Houses. The general public, therefore, knew little of Lord Chesterfield's eloquent defence of the liberty of the stage.

The Act was passed in June, when the patent theatres, according to custom, were closed for the summer. Some two months after their re-opening in the autumn all dramatic representations were suspended for six weeks, in consequence of the death of Queen Caroline. In January was presented at Covent Garden "A Nest of Plays," as the author, one Hildebrand Jacob, described his production: a combination of three short plays, each consisting of one act only, entitled respectively, "The Prodigal Reformed," "Happy Constancy," and "The Trial of Conjugal Love." The performance

met with a very unfavourable reception. The author attributed the ill success of his work to its being the first play licensed by the authority of the Lord Chamberlain under the new bill, many spectators having pre-determined to silence, under any circumstances, "the first fruits of that Act of Parliament." And this seems, indeed, to have been the case. The Abbé Le Blanc, who was present on the occasion, writes: "The best play in the world would not have succeeded that night. There was a disposition to damn whatever might appear. The farce in question was damned, indeed, without the least compassion. Nor was that all, for the actors were driven off the stage, and happy was it for the author that he did not fall into the hands of this furious assembly." And the Abbé proceeds to explain that the originators of this disturbance were not "schoolboys, apprentices, clerks, or mechanics," but lawyers, "a body of gentlemen perhaps less honoured, but certainly more feared here than they are in France," who, "from living in colleges (Inns of Court), and from conversing always with one another, mutually preserve a spirit of independency through the body, and with great ease form cabals. . . . At Paris the cabals of the pit are only among young fellows, whose years may excuse their folly, or persons of the meanest education and stamp; here they are the fruit of deliberation in a very grave body of people, who are not less for-

midable to the minister in place than to the theatrical writers." But the Abbé relates that on a subsequent occasion, when, another new play having been announced, he had looked for further disturbance, the judicious dramatist of the night succeeded in calming the pit by administering in his prologue a double dose of incense to their vanity. "Half an hour before the play was to begin the spectators gave notice of their dispositions by frightful hisses and outcries, equal, perhaps, to what were ever heard at a Roman amphitheatre." The author, however, having in part tamed this wild audience by his flattery, secured ultimately its absolute favour by humouring its prejudices after the grossest fashion. He brought upon the stage a figure "with black eyebrows, a ribbon of an ell long under his chin, a bag-peruke immoderately powdered, and his nose all bedaubed with snuff. What Englishman could not know a Frenchman by this ridiculous figure?" The Frenchman was presently shown to be, for all the lace down every seam of his coat, nothing but a cook, and then followed severe satire and criticism upon the manners and customs of France. "The excellence and virtues of English beef were extolled, and the author maintained that it was owing to the qualities of its juice that the English were so courageous and had such a solidity of understanding, which raised them above all the nations in Europe; he preferred the noble old

English pudding beyond all the finest ragouts that ever were invented by the greatest geniuses that France ever produced." These "ingenious strokes" were loudly applauded by the audience it seems, who, in their delight at the abuse lavished upon the French, forgot that they came to condemn the play and to uphold the ancient liberties of the stage. From that time forward, the Abbé states, "the law was executed without the least trouble; all the plays since have been quietly heard, and either succeeded or not according to their merits."

When Garrick visited Paris he declined to be introduced to the Abbé Le Blanc, "on account of the irreverence with which he had treated Shakespeare." There can, indeed, be no doubt that the Abbé, although he wrote amusing letters, was a very prejudiced person, and his evidence and opinions touching the English stage must be received with caution. So far as can be ascertained, especially by study of the "History of the Stage" (compiled by that industrious clergyman, Mr. Geneste, from the playbills in the British Museum), but few new plays were produced in the course of the season immediately following the passing of the Licensing Act; certainly no new play can be found answering the description furnished by the Abbé with due regard to the period he has fixed for its production. Possibly he referred to the "Beaux' Stratagem," in which appear a French officer and an Irish-

French priest, and which was certainly represented some few nights after the condemnation of Mr. Jacob's "Nest of Plays." Farquhar's comedy was then thirty years old, however. Nor has the Abbé done full justice to the public opposition offered to the Licensing Act. At the Haymarket Theatre a serious riot occurred in October, 1738, fifteen months after the passing of the measure. Closed against the English actors the theatre was opened by a French company, armed with a license from the Lord Chamberlain. A comedy, called "L'Embaras de Richesses," was announced for representation "by authority." The house was crowded immediately after the opening of the doors. But the audience soon gave evidence of their sentiments by singing in chorus "The Roast Beef of Old England." Then followed loud huzzas and general tumult. Deveil, one of the Justices of the Peace for Westminster, who was present, declared the proceedings to be riotous, and announced his intention to maintain the King's authority. He stated, further, that it was the King's command that the play should be acted, and that all offenders would be immediately secured by the guards in waiting. In opposition to the magistrate it was maintained "that the audience had a legal right to show their dislike to any play or actor; that the judicature of the pit had been acquiesced in, time immemorial; and as the present set of actors were to take their

fate from the public, they were free to receive them as they pleased." When the curtain drew up the actors were discovered standing between two files of grenadiers, with their bayonets fixed and resting on their firelocks. This seeming endeavour to secure the success of French acting by the aid of British bayonets still more infuriated the audience. Even Justice Deveil thought it prudent to order the withdrawal of the military. The actors attempted to speak, but their voices were overborne by hisses, groans, and "not only catcalls, but all the various portable instruments that could make a disagreeable noise." A dance was next essayed; but even this had been provided against: showers of peas descended upon the stage, and "made capering very unsafe." The French and Spanish Ambassadors, with their ladies, who had occupied the stage-box, now withdrew, only to be insulted outside the theatre by the mob, who had cut the traces of their carriages. The curtain at last fell, and the attempt to present French plays at the Haymarket was abandoned, "the public being justly indignant that whilst an arbitrary act suppressed native talent, foreign adventurers should be patronised and encouraged." It must be said, however, that the French actors suffered for sins not their own, and that the wrath of the public did not really reach the Lord Chamberlain, or effect any change in the Licensing Act.

For twenty years the Haymarket remained without a license of any endurance. The theatre was occasionally opened, however, for brief seasons, by special permission of the Chamberlain or in defiance of his authority, many ingenious subterfuges being resorted to, so that the penalties imposed by the Act might be evaded. One of the advertisements ran—"At Cibber's Academy, in the Haymarket, will be a concert, after which will be exhibited (gratis) a rehearsal, in form of a play, called *Romeo and Juliet*." Macklin, the actor, opened the theatre in 1744, and under the pretence of instructing "unfledged performers" in "the science of acting," gave a variety of dramatic representations. It was expressly announced that no money would be taken at the doors, "nor any person admitted but by printed tickets, which will be delivered by Mr. Macklin, at his house in Bow Street, Covent Garden." At one of these performances Samuel Foote made his first appearance upon the stage, sustaining the part of Othello. Presently, Foote ventured to give upon the stage of the Haymarket, a monologue entertainment, called "*Diversions of a Morning*." At the instance of Lacy, however, one of the patentees of Drury Lane Theatre, whom Foote had satirised, the performance was soon prohibited. But Foote was not easily discouraged; and, by dint of wit and impudence, for some time baffled the authorities. He invited his

friends to attend the theatre, at noon, and "drink a dish of chocolate with him." He promised that he would "endeavour to make the morning as diverting as possible;" and notified that "Sir Dilbury Diddle would be there, and Lady Betty Frisk has absolutely promised." Tickets, without which no person would be admitted, were to be obtained at George's Coffee House, Temple Bar. Some simple visitors, no doubt, expected that chocolate would be really served to them. But the majority were content with an announcement from the stage that, while chocolate was preparing, Mr. Foote would, with the permission of his friends, proceed with his instruction of certain pupils he was educating in the art of acting. Under this pretence a dramatic representation was really given, and repeated on some forty occasions. Then he grew bolder, and opened the theatre in the evening, at the request, as he stated, "of several persons who are desirous of spending an hour with Mr. Foote, but find the time inconvenient." Instead of chocolate in the morning, Mr. Foote's friends were therefore invited to drink "a dish of tea" with him at half-past six in the evening. By-and-by, his entertainment was slightly varied, and described as an Auction of Pictures. Eventually, Foote obtained from the Duke of Devonshire, the Lord Chamberlain, a permanent license for the theatre, and the Haymarket took rank as a regular and legal place of enter-

tainment, to be open, however, only during the summer months. Upon Foote's decease, the theatre devolved upon George Colman, who obtained a continuance of the license.

The theatre in Goodman's Fields underwent experiences very similar to those of the Haymarket. Under the provisions of the Licensing Act its performances became liable to the charge of illegality. It was without a patent or a license. It was kept open professedly for concerts of vocal and instrumental music, divided into two parts. Between these parts dramatic performances were presented gratis. The obscurity of the theatre, combined with its remote position, probably protected it for some time from interference and suppression. But on the 19th October, 1741, at this unlicensed theatre, a gentleman, who, as the playbill of the night untruly stated, had never before appeared on any stage, undertook the part of Richard III. in Cibber's version of Shakespeare's tragedy. The gentleman's name was David Garrick. Had he failed the theatre might have lived on. But his success was fatal to it. The public went in crowds from all parts of the town to see the new actor. "From the polite ends of Westminster the most elegant company flocked to Goodman's Fields, insomuch that from Temple Bar the whole way was covered with a string of coaches." The patentees of Drury Lane and Covent Garden interfered, "alarmed

at the deficiency of their own receipts," and invoked the aid of the Lord Chamberlain. The Goodman's Fields Theatre was closed, and Garrick was spirited away to Drury Lane, with a salary of 600 guineas a year, a larger sum than had ever before been awarded to any performer.

It will be seen that the Chamberlain had deemed it his mission to limit, as much as possible, the number of places of theatrical entertainment in London. Playgoers were bidden to be content with Drury Lane and Covent Garden; it was not conceivable to the noblemen and commoners occupying the Houses of Parliament, or to the place-holders in the Chamberlain's office, or in the royal household, that other theatres could possibly be required.

Still attempts were occasionally made to establish additional places of entertainment. In 1785, John Palmer, the actor, famous as the original Joseph Surface, laid the first stone of a new theatre, to be called the East London, or Royalty, in the neighbourhood of the old Goodman's Fields Theatre, which had been many years abandoned of the actors and converted into a goods-warehouse. The building was completed in 1787. The opening representation was announced; when the proprietors of the patent theatres gave warning that any infringement of their privileges would be followed by the prosecution of Mr. Palmer

and his company. The performances took place, nevertheless, but they were stated to be for the benefit of the London Hospital, and not, therefore, for "hire, gain, or reward;" so the actors avoided risk of commitment as rogues and vagabonds. But necessarily the enterprise ended in disaster. Palmer, his friends alleged, lost his whole fortune; it was shrewdly suspected, however, that he had, in truth, no fortune to lose. In any case he speedily retired from the new theatre. It was open for brief seasons with such exhibitions of music, dancing, and pantomime, as were held to be unaffected by the Act, and permissible under the license of the local magistrates. From time to time, however, the relentless patentees took proceedings against the actors. Delpini, the clown, was even committed to prison for exclaiming "Roast Beef!" in a Christmas pantomime. By uttering words without the accompaniment of music he had, it appeared, constituted himself an actor of a stage play.

Some five-and-twenty years later, Elliston was now memorialising the king, now petitioning the House of Commons and the Privy Council, in reference to the opening of an additional theatre. He had been in treaty for the Pantheon, in Oxford Street, and urged that "the intellectual community would be benefited by an extension of license for the regular drama." As lessee of the Royal Circus or Surrey Theatre, he besought liberty to exhibit and perform "all

such entertainments of music and action as were commonly called pantomimes and ballets, together with operatic or musical pieces, accompanied with dialogue in the ordinary mode of dramatic representations," subject, at all times, to the control and restraint of the Lord Chamberlain, "in conformity to the laws by which theatres possessing those extensive privileges were regulated." But all was in vain. The king would not "notice any representation connected with the establishment of another theatre." The other petitions were without result.

Gradually, however, it became necessary for the authorities to recognise the fact that the public really did require more amusements of a theatrical kind than the privileged theatres could furnish. But the regular drama, it was held, must still be protected; performed only on the patent boards. So now "burletta licenses" were issued, under cover of which melodramas were presented, with entertainments of music and dancing, spectacle and pantomime. In 1809, the Lyceum or English Opera House, which for some years before had been licensed for music and dancing, was licensed for "musical dramatic entertainments and ballets of action." The Adelphi, then called the Sans Pareil Theatre, received a "burletta license" about the same time. In 1813 the Olympic was licensed for similar performances and for horsemanship; but it was for a while

closed again by the Chamberlain's order, upon Elliston's attempt to call the theatre Little Drury Lane, and to represent upon its stage something more like the "regular drama" than had been previously essayed at a minor house. "Burletta licenses" were also granted for the St. James's in 1835, and for the Strand in 1836.

And, in despite of the authorities, theatres had been established on the Surrey side of the Thames ; but, in truth, for the accommodation of the dwellers on the Middlesex shore. Under the Licensing Act, while the Chamberlain was constituted licenser of all new plays throughout Great Britain, his power to grant licenses for theatrical entertainments was confined within the city and liberties of Westminster, and wherever the sovereign might reside. The Surrey, the Coburg (afterwards the Victoria), Astley's, &c., were, therefore, out of his jurisdiction. There seemed, indeed, to be no law in existence under which they could be licensed. They affected to be open under a magistrate's license for "music, dancing, and public entertainments." But this, in truth, afforded them no protection when it was thought worth while to prosecute the managers for presenting dramatic exhibitions. For although an Act, passed in the 28th year of George III., enabled justices of the peace, under certain restrictions, to grant licenses for dramatic entertainments, their powers did not extend to within twenty

miles of London. Lambeth was thus neutral ground, over which neither the Lord Chamberlain nor the country justices had any real authority, with this difficulty about the case—performances that could not be licensed could not be legalised.

The law continued in this unsatisfactory state till the passing, in 1843, of the Act for Regulating Theatres. This deprived the patent theatres of their monopoly of the “regular drama,” in that it extended the Lord Chamberlain’s power to grant licenses for the performance of stage plays to all theatres within the parliamentary boundaries of the City of London and Westminster, and of the Boroughs of Finsbury and Marylebone, the Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, and Southwark, and also “within those places where Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, shall, in their royal persons, occasionally reside;” it being fully understood that all the theatres then existing in London would receive forthwith the Chamberlain’s license “to give stage plays in the fullest sense of the word;” to be taken to include, according to the terms of the Act, “every tragedy, comedy, farce, opera, burletta, interlude, melodrama, pantomime, or other entertainment of the stage, or any part thereof.”

Thus, at last, more than a century after the passing of the Licensing Act, certain of its more mischievous restrictions were in effect repealed. A measure of free trade in theatres

was established. The Lord Chamberlain was still to be "the lawful monarch of the stage," but in the future his rule was to be more constitutional, less absolute than it had been. The public were no longer to be confined to Drury Lane and Covent Garden in the winter, and the Haymarket in the summer. Actors were enabled, managers and public consenting, to personate Hamlet or Macbeth, or other heroes of the poetic stage, at Lambeth, Clerkenwell, or Shoreditch, anywhere indeed, without risk of committal to gaol. It was no longer necessary to call a play a "burletta," or to touch a note upon the piano, now and then, in the course of a performance, so as to justify its claim to be a musical entertainment; all subterfuges of this kind ceased.

It was with considerable reluctance, however, that the Chamberlain, in his character of Licenser of Playhouses, divested himself of the paternal authority he had so long exercised. He long clung to the notion that he was a far better judge of the requirements and desires of playgoers than they could possibly be themselves. He was strongly of opinion that the number of theatres was "sufficient for the theatrical wants of the metropolis." He could not allow that the matter should be regulated by the ordinary laws of supply and demand, or by any regard for the large annual increase of the population. Systematically he hindered all enterprise in

the direction of new theatres. It was always doubtful whether his license would be granted, even after a new building had been completed. He decided that he must be guided by his own views of "the interests of the public." It is not clear that he possessed authority in this respect other than that derived from custom and the traditions of his office. The Act of 1843 contained no special provisions on the subject. But he insisted that all applicants for the licensing of new theatres should be armed with petitions in favour of the proposal signed by many of the inhabitants in the immediate vicinity of the projected building; he required the Police Commissioners to verify the truth of these petitions, and to report whether inconvenience was likely to result in the way of interruption of traffic, or otherwise, from the establishment of a new theatre. Further, he obtained the opinion of the parish authorities, the churchwardens, &c., of the district; he was even suspected of taking counsel with the managers of neighbouring establishments; "in short, he endeavoured to convince himself generally that the grant of the license would satisfy a legitimate want"—or what the Chamberlain in his wisdom, or his unwisdom, held to be such.

Under these conditions it is not surprising that for nearly a quarter of a century there was no addition made to the list of London theatres. But time moves on, and even Chamberlains

have to move with it. Of late years there has been no difficulty in regard to the licensing of new theatres, and the metropolis has been the richer by many well-conducted houses of dramatic entertainment.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXAMINER OF PLAYS.

THE Lord Chamberlain holds office only so long as the political party to which he is attached remains in power. He comes in and goes out with the ministry. Any peculiar fitness for the appointment is not required of him ; it is simply a reward for his parliamentary services. Of course different Chamberlains have entertained different opinions of the duties to be performed in regard to the theatres ; and, in such wise, much embarrassment has arisen. The Chamberlain's office is supported by a grant from the civil list, which is settled upon the accession of the sovereign. In addition, fees are received for the licensing of theatres, and for the examination of plays.

The Examiner of Plays has long been recognised as a more permanent functionary than the Lord Chamberlain, although it would seem the precise nature of his appointment has never been clearly understood. "I believe," said Mr.

Donne, the late Examiner, in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee of 1866, "that it is an appointment that expires with the sovereign (at least, I infer so from the evidence which Mr. Colman gave in the year 1833), but I cannot say that from my own knowledge: I believe it to be an appointment for life."

In truth, the Examiner is simply the employé of the Chamberlain, appointed by him, and holding the office only so long as the superior functionary shall deem fitting. There is no instance on record, however, of the displacement of an Examiner, or of the cancelling by one Chamberlain of the appointment made by his predecessor. Power of this kind, however, would seem to be vested in the Chamberlain for the time being. Colman's evidence, it may be noted, is of no present worth. He was appointed as a consequence of the old Licensing Act, which, as we shall presently show, was repealed in 1843.

The first Licenser of Plays sworn in after the passing of the Licensing Act of 1737 was William Chetwynd, with a salary of £400 a year. But this deputy of the Chamberlain was in his turn allowed a deputy, and one Thomas Odell was appointed assistant examiner, with a salary of £200 a year. Strange to say, it was this Odell who had first opened a theatre in Goodman's Fields, which, upon the complaint of the civic authorities, who believed the drama

to be a source of danger to the London apprentices of the period, he had been compelled forthwith to close. He applied to George II. for a royal license, but met with a peremptory refusal. In 1731 he sold his property to one Giffard, who rebuilt the theatre, and, dispensing with official permission, performed stage plays between the intervals of a concert, until producing Garrick, and obtaining extraordinary success by that measure, he roused the jealousy of the authorities, and was compelled to forego his undertaking.

The Licenser's power of prohibition was exercised very shortly after his appointment, in the case of two tragedies: "*Gustavus Vasa*," by Henry Brooke, and "*Edward and Eleonora*," by James Thomson. Political allusions of an offensive kind were supposed to lurk somewhere in these works. "*Gustavus Vasa*" was especially forbidden "on account of some strokes of liberty which breathed through several parts of it." On the Irish stage, however, over which the Chamberlain had no power, the play was performed as "*The Patriot*;" while, by the publication of "*Gustavus Vasa*," Mr. Brooke obtained £1,000 or so from a public curious as to the improprieties it was alleged to contain, and anxious to protest against the oppressive conduct of the Licenser. In 1805, with the permission of the Chamberlain, the play was produced at Covent Garden, in order that Master Betty,

the Young Roscius, might personate the hero. But the youthful actor failed in the part, and the tragedy, being found rather dull, was represented but once. At this time Mr. Brooke had been dead some years. In a preface to his play he had vouched for its purity, and denounced the conduct of the Licensor, as opposed to the intention of the Legislature, Doctor Johnson assisting his cause by the publication of an ironical pamphlet—"A Vindication of the Licensor from the malicious and scandalous aspersions of Mr. Brooke." Modern readers may well be excused for knowing little of the dramatist whose "*Gustavus Vasa*" had no great deal to recommend it, perhaps, beyond the fact of its performance having been prohibited. Yet some few years since, it may be noted, the late Charles Kingsley made endeavours, more strenuous than successful, to obtain applause for Brooke's novel, "*The Fool of Quality*;" but although a new and handsome edition of this work was published, it was received with some apathy by the romance-reading public.

The author of "*The Seasons*" hardly seems a writer likely to give offence designedly to a Chamberlain. But Thomson was a sort of Poet Laureate to Frederick, Prince of Wales, then carrying on fierce opposition to the court of his father, and the play of "*Edward and Eleonora*"—a dramatic setting of the old legend of Queen Eleanor sucking the poison from her

husband's arm—certainly contained passages applicable to the differences existing between the king and his heir-apparent. In the first scene, one of the characters demands,

Has not the royal heir a juster claim
To share his father's inmost heart and counsels,
Then aliens to his interest, those who make
A property, a market of his honour ?

And King Edward apostrophises his dead sire—

O my deluded father ! little joy
Hadst thou in life, led from thy real good
And genuine glory, from thy people's love,
The noblest aim of kings, by smiling traitors !

In 1775, however, the play was produced at Covent Garden. George III. was king, and the allusions to the squabbles of his father and grandfather were not, perhaps, supposed to be any longer of the remotest concern or significance to anybody.

At this time, and long afterwards, the Licensor regarded it as his chief duty to protect the court against all possibility of attack from the stage. With the morality of plays he did not meddle much ; but he still clung to the old superstition that the British drama had only a right to exist as the pastime of royalty ; plays and players were still to be subservient to the pleasure of the sovereign. The British public who, after all, really supported the stage, he declined to consider in the matter ; conceding, however, that they were at liberty

to be amused at the theatre, provided they could achieve that end in strict accordance with the prescriptions of the court and its Chamberlain. In George III.'s time King Lear was prohibited, because it was judged inexpedient that royal insanity should be exhibited upon the stage. In 1808 a play, called "The Wanderer," adapted from Kotzebue, was forbidden at Covent Garden, in that it dealt with the adventures of Prince Charles Edward, the Pretender. Even after the accession of Queen Victoria, a license was refused to an English version of Victor Hugo's "Ruy Blas," lest playgoers should perceive in it allusions to the matrimonial choice her Majesty was then about to make.

The Licensor's keenness in scenting a political allusion oftentimes, indeed, entailed upon him much and richly-merited ridicule. The production, some fifty years ago, of a tragedy, called "Alasco," furnishes a notable instance of the absurdity of his conduct in this respect. "Alasco" was written by Mr. Shee, a harmless gentleman enough, if at that time a less fully-developed courtier than he appeared when, as Sir Martin Archer Shee, he occupied the presidential chair of the Royal Academy. Possibly some suspicion attached to the dramatist by reason of his being an Irishman and a Roman Catholic. In any case, the Licensor found much to object to in "Alasco." The play was in rehearsal at Covent Garden ;

but so many alterations and suppressions were insisted on, that its representation became impracticable. We may note a few of the lines expunged by the Licensor—

With most unworthy patience have I seen
My country shackled and her sons oppressed ;
And though I've felt their injuries, and avow
My ardent hope hereafter to avenge them, &c.

Tyrants, proud lord, are never safe, nor should be ;
The ground is mined beneath them as they tread ;
Haunted by plots, cabals, conspiracies,
Their lives are long convulsions, and they shake,
Surrounded by their guards and garrisons !

Some slanderous tool of state,
Some taunting, dull, unmannered deputy !

The words in italics were to be expunged from the following passages—

'Tis ours to rescue from the oblivious grave
Where tyrants have contrived to bury them,
A gallant race—a nation—and her fame ;
To gather up the fragments of our state,
And in its cold, dismembered body, breathe,
The living soul of empire.

Fear God and love the king—the soldier's faith—
Was always my religion ; and I know
No heretics but cowards, knaves, and traitors—
No, no, whate'er the colour of his creed,
The man of honour's orthodox.

It is difficult now to discover what offence was contained in these lines, and many more such as these, which were also denounced by the Licensor. Shee expostulated—for he was not a meek sort of man by any means, and he knew the advantages of a stir to one aiming

at publicity—appealed from the subordinate to the superior, from the Examiner to the Chamberlain, then the Duke of Montrose, and wrote to the newspapers ; but all in vain. The tragedy could not be performed. That the stage lost much it would be rash to assert. “Alasco” was published, and those who read it—they were not many—found it certainly harmless ; but not less certainly pompous and wearisome. However, that Shee was furnished with a legitimate grievance was generally agreed, although in Blackwood’s Magazine, then very intense in its Toryism, it was hinted that the dramatist, his religion and his nationality being considered, might be in league with the author of Captain Rock, and engaged in seditious designs against the peace and Protestantism of Ireland ! Some five years later, it may be noted, “Alasco” was played at the Surrey Theatre, without the slightest regard for the opinion of the Examiner of Plays, or with any change in the passages he had ordered to be expunged. Westminster was not then very well informed as to what happened in Lambeth, and probably it was not generally known that “Alasco,” with all its supposed seditious utterances unsilenced, could be witnessed upon the Surrey stage. Nor is there any record that anybody was at all the worse, or the treasury of the theatre any the better, for the representation of the forbidden tragedy.

The Examiner of Plays at this time was George Colman the younger, who was appointed to the office, less on account of the distinction he enjoyed as a dramatist, than because he was a favourite and a sort of boon companion of George IV. Colman had succeeded a Mr. Larpent, who had filled the post for some twenty years, and who, notwithstanding that, as a strict Methodist, he scarcely seemed a very fit person to pronounce judgment upon stage plays, had exercised the powers entrusted to him with moderation. It was generally agreed that he was a considerate and benignant ruler, and that his career as Examiner offered few occasions for remark, although upon its close some surprise was excited at the exposure for sale by public auction of the many manuscripts of plays, &c., which were found in his possession, and which should certainly have been preserved among the archives of the Chamberlain's office. Colman, however, proved a very tyrant—a consummate Jack-in-office. As a gentleman of rather unbridled habits of life, and the author of "Broad Grins" and other works certainly paying small heed to the respectabilities, it had been hoped that he would deal leniently with his brother playwrights. But he carried to fanatic extravagance his devotion to the purity of the stage. Warned by earlier example, few dramas which could possibly be considered of a political complexion were now submitted for

examination. Still the diction of the stage demanded a measure of liberty. But Mr. Colman would not allow a lover to describe his mistress as "an angel." He avowed that "an angel was a character in Scripture, and not to be profaned on the stage by being applied to a woman!" The exclamation, "Oh, Providence!" was not permitted. The words "heaven" and "hell" he uniformly expunged. "Oh, lud!" and "Oh, la!" were condemned for irreverence. Oaths and all violent expletives were strictly prohibited.

Now it was rather an imprecatory age. Men swore in those days, not meaning much harm, or particularly conscious of what they were doing, but as a matter of bad habit, in pursuance of a custom certainly odious enough, but which they had not originated, and could hardly be expected immediately to overcome. In this way malediction formed part of the manners of the time. How could these be depicted upon the stage in the face of Mr. Colman's new ordinance? There was great consternation among actors and authors. Plays came back from the Examiner's office so slashed with red ink that they seemed to be bleeding from numerous wounds; line after line had been prohibited; and by Colman of all people! Critics amused themselves by searching through his own dramatic writings, and cataloguing the bad language they contained. The list was very formidable. There were comminations

and anathemas in almost every scene. The matter was pointed out to him, but he treated it with indifference. He was a writer of plays then; but now he was Examiner of Plays. His point of view was changed, that was all. It was no fault of his if there had been neglect of duty on the part of previous examiners. Mr. Arnold, the proprietor and manager of the Lyceum Theatre, expostulated with him on the subject. In a play by John Banim, one of the authors of the "Tales of the O'Hara Family," Colman had forbidden certain lines to be chanted by monks and nuns in a scene of a foreign cathedral. It was too profane. What about the singing of "God save the King" upon the stage? That had been sanctioned by custom, Colman maintained; but he could not regard it as a precedent. Was he prepared to mutilate Portia's great speech in the "Merchant of Venice?" Certainly he was; but then custom had sanctioned it, and playgoers were not prepared for any meddling with the text of Shakespeare. He admitted, however, that he did not trouble himself to ascertain whether his excisions were carried into effect when the plays came to be represented. "My duty," he said, "is simply to object to everything immoral or politically dangerous. When I have marked my objections the play is licensed, subject to the omission of the passages objected to; beyond this I have nothing to do, or an examiner would become a spy as well as a censor on the

theatre." Any breach of law was therefore left to be remedied by the action of the "common informer" of the period.

As evidence of Colman's lack of conscientiousness in this matter, a letter he wrote to Mr. Frederick Yates, in 1829, may be cited. A dramatic author, the friend both of Colman and Yates, had bitterly complained of the retrenchments made by the Examiner in a certain play, or, to follow Colman's own words, had stated "that his comedy would be sure to be damned by the public, owing to the removal of some devilish good jokes by the Examiner." "Cannot you, my dear Fred, instruct him better?" wrote Colman. "The play, you know, must be printed in strict accordance with my obliterations; but if the parts be previously given out, it will be difficult to induce the actors to preach from my text!" No doubt upon this hint the actors spake. Only, in that case, of what good was the Examiner, regarded as a public servant?

It was questioned at the time whether the Chamberlain, by his deputy, was not exercising more authority than he was really clothed with, under virtue of the Licensing Act. He was entitled to prohibit the performance of any play; but could he make terms with the managers, and cut and carve their manuscripts, forcing upon them his capricious alteration? Further, it was asked by what right he delegated his power to

another? The Act made no mention of his deputy or of such an officer as an Examiner of Plays. And then, as to the question of fees. What right had he to exact fees? There was no mention of fees in the Act. No doubt the managers had long been in the habit of paying fees — £2 2s. for every piece, song, &c. But it was urged that this was simply to secure expedition in the examination of their plays, which they were bound to submit to the Chamberlain fourteen days at least before representation, and not in pursuance of any legal enactment. The Examiner of Plays received a salary from the Chamberlain for the labour he performed; why should he levy a tax upon managers and authors, and so be paid twice over for the same work?

Now, on the subject of fees Colman was certainly most rapacious. He spared no effort to increase, in this way, the emoluments of his office. Did an actor on a benefit-night advertise any new songs, glees, or other musical performance—Colman was prompt to demand a fee of £2 2s. for every separate production. Occasional addresses, prologues, and epilogues, were all rated as distinct stage plays, and the customary fees insisted upon. One actor, long famous as “Little Knight,” so far defeated this systematic extortion that he strung together a long list of songs, recitations, imitations, &c., which he wished to

have performed at his benefit with any nonsense of dialogue that came into his head, and so sent them to be licensed as one piece. They were licensed accordingly; the dialogue was all omitted, and the ingenious actor aided his benefit by saving £8 8s. or £10 10s., which would otherwise have found their way into the pocket of the Examiner. When the French plays were performed in London, in 1829, Colman insisted that a fee must be paid for every vaudeville or other light piece of that class produced. As some three or four of such works were presented every night—the same plays being rarely repeated—it was computed that the Examiner's fees amounted upon an average to £6 6s. a night. During an interval, however, the Duke of Devonshire succeeding the Duke of Montrose as Chamberlain, this demand was not enforced; eventually a compromise was agreed upon, and a reduced fee of £1 1s. was levied upon each vaudeville, &c. Colman even succeeded in rating as a stage play, an astronomical lecture, delivered at the Lyceum. The "At Homes" of Mathews were of course taxed, a "slight sketch and title" being submitted to the Examiner, the actor professing to speak without any precise text, but simply from "heads and hints before him to refer to, should his memory falter." In an attempt to levy a fee on account of an oratorio performed at

Covent Garden, Colman failed, however ; it was proved that the libretto was entirely composed of passages from the Scriptures. After great discussion it was ultimately decided that the Bible did not need the licence of the Lord Chamberlain.

Colman died in 1836, and was succeeded as Examiner of Plays by Mr. Charles Kemble, who, strange to say, while holding that appointment returned to the stage for a short season and performed certain of his most celebrated characters. He resigned the office in 1840, and his son John Mitchell Kemble then held it in his stead. On the death of John Mitchell Kemble in 1857 Mr. William Bodham Donne, the late Examiner, received the appointment. Mr. Donne, however, had in truth performed the duties of the office as the deputy of the Chamberlain's deputy since the year 1849. As he informed the Parliamentary committee of 1866, he had received a salary of £320, subject to deduction on account of income-tax. Further, the Examiner receives fees for every play examined. Two guineas are paid for every play of three acts or more ; under three acts the fee is £1 1s. For every song sung in a theatre a fee of 5s. is paid. As Mr. Donne explained to the committee, he had examined between 1857 and 1866 about 1,800 plays.

It is to be noted that in 1843 the act for regulating theatres, commonly known as Sir

James Graham's Act, became law. By this measure the powers of the Lord Chamberlain were enlarged and more firmly established; he was empowered to charge such fees as he might deem fit in regard to every play, prologue, epilogue, or part thereof, intended to be produced or acted in Great Britain, although no fee was in any case to exceed £2 2s. in amount. Further, it was made lawful for him, whenever he should be of opinion that it was fitting for the preservation of good manners, decorum, or of the public peace so to do, to forbid the performance of any stage play, or any act, scene or part thereof, or any prologue or epilogue or any part thereof, anywhere in Great Britain or in any such theatre as he should specify, and either absolutely or for such time as he should think fit. It was enacted, moreover, that the word "stage-play" should be taken to include "every tragedy, comedy, farce, opera, burletta, interlude, melodrama, pantomime, or other entertainment of the stage."

The Act provides for no appeal against the decision of the Chamberlain. His government was to be quite absolute. If he chose to prohibit the performance of Shakespeare's plays, for instance, no one could question his right to take that strong measure; only another Act of Parliament could, under such circumstances, restore Shakespeare to the stage. Of the Examiner of Plays the Act made no men-

tion : that office continued to be the creation simply of the Lord Chamberlain, and without any sort of legal status. The old Licensing Act of 1737 was absolutely repealed ; yet, unaccountably enough, Mr. Donne's appointment, bearing date 1857, and signed by the Marquis of Breadalbane, then Lord Chamberlain, began : " Whereas in consequence of an Act of Parliament, made in the tenth year of the reign of His late Majesty King George the Second," &c. &c.

The intensity of George Colman's regard for " good manners and decorum " has no doubt furnished a precedent to later Examiners. For some time little effort was made again to apply the stage to the purposes of political satire. Mr. Buckstone informed the Parliamentary Committee that an attempt, made about 1846, to represent the House of Commons upon the stage of the Adelphi—Mr. Buckstone was to have personated the Lord John Russell of that date—had been promptly forbidden ; and the late Mr. Shirley Brooks stated that a project of dramatising Mr. Disraeli's novel of " Coningsby " had also, in regard to its political bearing, been interdicted by the Chamberlain. Few other essays in this direction appear worth noting, until we come to a season or two back, when certain members of the late administration were caricatured upon the stage of the Court Theatre, after a fashion that speedily brought down the rebuke of the

Chamberlain, and the exhibition was prohibited within his jurisdiction. But the question of "good manners and decorum" has induced much controversy. For where, indeed, is discoverable an acceptable standard of "good manners and decorum?" In such matters there is always growth and change of opinion. Sir Walter Scott makes mention of an elderly lady, who, reading over again certain books she had deemed in her youth to be of a most harmless kind, was shocked at their exceeding grossness. She had unconsciously moved on with the civilising and refining influences of her time. And the question of morality in relation to the drama is confessedly very difficult to deal with. "It must be something almost of a scandalous character to warrant interference," says Mr. Donne. "If you sift the matter to the very dross, two-thirds of the plays of any period in the history of the stage must be condemned. Where there is an obvious intention, or a very strong suspicion of an intention to make wrong appear right or right appear wrong, those are the cases in which I interfere, or those in which there is any open scandal, or any inducement to do wrong is offered; but stage morality is—the morality of the stage, and generally, quite as good as the morality of the literature of fiction." This does not define the Examiner's principle of action very clearly. As instances of his procedure, it may be stated that upon religious

grounds he has forbidden such operas as the "Nabuco" of Verdi and the "Mosé in Egitto" of Rossini, allowing them to be presented, however, when their names were changed to "Nino" and "Zora" or "Pietrol'Eremita" respectively. On the other hand, while prohibiting "La Dame aux Camélias" of M. Alexandre Dumas *fils*, he has sanctioned its performance as the opera "La Traviata." "I think," explained Mr. Donne, "that if there is a musical version of a piece it makes a difference, for the story is then subsidiary to the music and singing." Prohibiting "Jack Sheppard" he yet licensed for representation an adaptation of a French version of the same piece. Madame Ristori was not allowed to appear in the tragedy of "Myrrha," and the dramas which French companies of players visiting this country from time to time have designed to produce, have been severely dealt with, the Examiner forgetting, apparently, that such works should rather be judged by a foreign than a native standard of good manners and decorum. As a result, we have the strange fact of the Examiner stepping between the English public and what have been held to be the masterpieces of the French stage.

The Chamberlain has also held it to be a part of his duty to interfere in regard to certain of the costumes of the theatre, when these seemed to be more scanty than seemliness required, and from time to time he has ad-

ressed expostulations to the managers upon the subject. It must not be concluded, however, that from his action in this matter, much change or amendment has ensued.

In America there is no Lord Chamberlain, Examiner of Plays, or any corresponding functionary. The stage may be no better for the absence of such an officer, but it does not seem to be any the worse.

In 1832, Lord Lytton (then Mr. Bulwer), addressing the House of Commons on the laws affecting dramatic literature, said of the authority vested in the Lord Chamberlain: "I am at a loss to know what advantages we have gained by the grant of this almost unconstitutional power. Certainly, with regard to a censor, a censor upon plays seems to me as idle and unnecessary as a censor upon books."

CHAPTER V.

A BILL OF THE PLAY.

ARE there, nowadays, any collectors of playbills? In the catalogues of secondhand-booksellers are occasionally to be found such entries as: "Playbills of the Theatre Royal, Bath, 1807 to 1812;" or "Hull Theatre Royal—various bills of performances between 1815 and 1850;" or "Covent Garden Theatre—variety of old bills of the last century pasted in a volume;" yet these evidences of the care and diligence of past collectors would not seem to obtain much appreciation in the present. The old treasures can generally be purchased at a very moderate outlay. Still, if scarceness is an element of value, these things should be precious. It is in the nature of such ephemera of the printing-press to live their short hour, and disappear with exceeding suddenness. They may be originally issued in hundreds or even in thousands; but once gone they are gone for ever. Relative to such matters there

is an energy of destruction that keeps pace with the industry of production. The demands of "waste" must be met: fires must be lighted. So away go the loose papers—sheets and pamphlets of the minute. They have served their turn, and there is an end of them. Hence the difficulty of obtaining, when needed, a copy of a newspaper of old date, or the guide-book or programme of a departed entertainment, or the catalogue of a past auction of books or pictures. It has been noted that, notwithstanding the enormous circulation it enjoyed, the catalogue of our Great Exhibition of a score of years ago is already a somewhat rare volume. Complete sets of the catalogues of the Royal Academy's century of exhibitions are possessed by very few. And of playbills of the English stage from the Restoration down to the present time, although the British Museum can certainly boast a rich collection, yet this is disfigured here and there by gaps and deficiencies which cannot now possibly be supplied.

The playbill is an ancient thing. Mr. Payne Collier states that the practice of printing information as to the time, place, and nature of the performances to be presented by the players was certainly common prior to the year 1563. John Northbrooke, in his treatise against theatrical performers, published about 1579, says: "They used to set up their bills upon posts some certain days before, to admonish people

to make resort to their theatres." The old plays make frequent reference to this posting of the playbills. Thus, in the Induction to "A Warning for Fair Women," 1599, Tragedy whips Comedy from the stage, crying :

'Tis you have kept the theatre so long
Painted in playbills upon every post,
While I am scorned of the multitude.

Taylor, the water-poet, in his "Wit and Mirth," records the story of Field the actor's riding rapidly up Fleet Street, and being stopped by a gentleman with an inquiry as to the play that was to be played that night. Field, "being angry to be stayed upon so frivolous a demand, answered, that he might see what play was to be played upon every post. 'I cry you mercy,' said the gentleman. 'I took you for a post, you rode so fast.'"

It is strange to find that the right of printing playbills was originally monopolised by the Stationers' Company. At a later period, however, the privilege was assumed and exercised by the Crown. In 1620, James the First granted a patent to Roger Wood and Thomas Symcocke for the sole printing, among other things, of "all bills for playes, pastimes, shoves, challenges, prizes, or sportes whatsoever." It was not until after the Restoration that the playbills contained a list of the *dramatis personæ*, or of the names of the actors. But it had been usual, apparently,

with the title of the drama, to supply the name of its author and its description as a tragedy or comedy. Shirley, in the prologue to his "Cardinal," apologises for calling it only a "play" in the bill :

Think what you please, we call it but a "play :"
Whether the comic muse, or lady's love,
Romance or direful tragedy it prove,
The bill determines not.

From a later passage in the same prologue Mr. Collier judges that the titles of tragedies were usually printed, for the sake of distinction, in red ink :

—and you would be
Persuaded I would have't a comedy
For all the purple in the name.

There is probably no playbill extant of an earlier date than 1663. About this time, in the case of a new play, it was usual to state in the bill that it had been "never acted before."

In the earliest days of the stage, before the invention of printing, the announcement that theatrical performances were about to be exhibited was made by sound of trumpet, much after the manner of modern strollers and showmen at fairs and street-corners. Indeed, long after playbills had become common, this musical advertisement was still requisite for the due information of the unlettered patrons of the stage. In certain towns the musicians

were long looked upon as the indispensable heralds of the actors. Tate Wilkinson, writing in 1790, records that a custom obtained at Norwich, "and if abolished it has not been many years," of proclaiming in every street with drum and trumpet the performances to be presented at the theatre in the evening. A like practice also prevailed at Grantham. To the Lincolnshire company of players, however, this musical preface to their efforts seemed objectionable and derogatory, and they determined, on one of their visits to the town, to dispense with the old-established sounds. But the reform resulted in empty benches. Thereupon the "revered, well-remembered, and beloved Marquis of Granby" sent for the manager of the troop and thus addressed him: "Mr. Manager, I like a play. I like a player, and I shall be glad to serve you. But, my good friend, why are you all so offended at and averse to the noble sound of a drum? I like it, and all the inhabitants like it. Put my name on your playbill, provided you drum, but not otherwise. Try the effect on to-morrow night; if then you are as thinly attended as you have lately been, shut up your playhouse at once; but if it succeeds, drum away!" The players withdrew their opposition and followed the counsel of the marquis. The musical prelude was again heard in the streets of Grantham, and crowded houses were obtained. The company enjoyed a prosperous season, and left the town in great

credit. "And I am told," adds Wilkinson, "the custom is continued at Grantham to this day."

An early instance of the explanatory address, signed by the dramatist or manager, which so frequently accompanies the modern playbill, is to be found in the fly-sheet issued by Dryden in 1665. The poet thought it expedient in this way to inform the audience that his tragedy of "The Indian Emperor" was to be regarded as a sequel to a former work, "The Indian Queen," which he had written in conjunction with his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard. The handbill excited some amusement, by reason of its novelty, for in itself it was but a simple and useful intimation. In ridicule of this proceeding, Bayes, the hero of the Duke of Buckingham's burlesque, "The Rehearsal," is made to say: "I have printed above a hundred sheets of paper to insinuate the plot into the boxes."

Chetwood, who had been twenty years prompter at Drury Lane, and published a History of the Stage in 1749, describes a difficulty that had arisen in regard to printing the playbills. Of old the lists of characters had been set forth according to the books of the plays, without regard to the merits of the performers. "As, for example, in 'Macbeth,' Duncan, King of Scotland, appeared first in the bill, though acted by an insignificant person, and so every other actor appeared ac-

according to his dramatic dignity, all of the same-sized letter. But latterly, I can assure my readers, I have found it a difficult task to please some ladies as well as gentlemen, because I could not find letters large enough to please them; and some were so fond of elbow room that they would have shoved everybody out but themselves, as if one person was to do all, and have the merit of all, like generals of an army." Garrick seems to have been the first actor honoured by capital letters of extra size in the playbills. The Connoisseur, in 1754, says: "The writer of the playbills deals out his capitals in so just a proportion that you may tell the salary of each actor by the size of the letter in which his name is printed. When the present manager of Drury Lane first came on the stage a new set of types, two inches long, were cast on purpose to do honour to his extraordinary merit." These distinctions in the matter of printing occasioned endless jealousies among the actors. Macklin made it an express charge against his manager, Sheridan, the actor, that he was accustomed to print his own name in larger type than was permitted the other performers. Kean threatened to throw up his engagement at Drury Lane on account of his name having been printed in capitals of a smaller size than usual. His engagement of 1818 contained a condition, "and also that his name shall be continued in

the bills of performance in the same manner as it is at present," viz., large letters. On the other hand, Dowton, the comedian, greatly objected to having his name thus particularised, and expostulated with Elliston, his manager, on the subject. "I am sorry you have done this," he wrote. "You know well what I mean. This cursed quackery. These big letters. There is a want of respectability about it, or rather a notoriety, which gives one the feeling of an absconded felon, against whom a hue and cry is made public. Or if there be really any advantage in it, why should I, or any single individual, take it over the rest of our brethren? But it has a nasty disreputable look, and I have fancied the whole day the finger of the town pointed at me, as much as to say, 'That is he! Now for the reward!' Leave this expedient to the police officers, or to those who have a taste for it. I have none."

O'Keeffe relates that once when an itinerant showman brought over to Dublin a trained monkey of great acquirements, Mossop engaged the animal at a large salary to appear for a limited number of nights at his theatre. Mossop's name in the playbill was always in a type nearly two inches long, the rest of the performers' names being in very small letters. But to the monkey were devoted capitals of equal size to Mossop's; so that, greatly to the amusement of the public, on the playbills pasted about the town, nothing could be dis-

tinguished but the words, *MOSSOP, MONKEY*. Under John Kemble's management, "for his greater ease and the quiet of the theatre," letters of unreasonable size were abandoned, and the playbills were printed after an amended and more modest pattern.

With the rise and growth of the press came the expediency of advertising the performances of the theatres in the columns of the newspapers. To the modern manager advertisements are a very formidable expense. The methods he is compelled to resort to in order to bring his plays and players well under the notice of the public, involve a serious charge upon his receipts. But of old the case was precisely the reverse. The theatres were strong, the newspapers were weak. So far from the manager paying money for the insertion of his advertisements in the journals, he absolutely received profits on this account. The press then suffered under severe restrictions, and was most jealously regarded by the governing powers; leading articles were as yet unknown; the printing of parliamentary debates was strictly prohibited; foreign intelligence was scarcely obtainable; of home news there was little stirring that could with safety be promulgated. So that the proceedings of the theatres became of real importance to the newspaper proprietor, and it was worth his while to pay considerable sums for early information in this respect. Moreover,

in those days, not merely by reason of its own merits, but because of the absence of competing attractions and other sources of entertainment, the stage was much more than at present an object of general regard. In Andrew's "History of British Journals" it is recorded, on the authority of the ledger of Henry Woodfall, the publisher of the *Public Advertiser*: "The theatres are a great expense to the papers. Amongst the items of payment are, playhouses £100. Drury Lane advertisements, £64 8s. 6d.; Covent Garden, ditto, £66 11s. The papers paid £200 a year to each theatre for the accounts of new plays, and would reward the messenger with a shilling or half-a-crown who brought them the first copy of a playbill." In 1721, the following announcement appeared in the *Daily Post*: "The managers of Drury Lane think it proper to give notice that advertisements of their plays, by their authority, are published only in this paper and the *Daily Courant*, and that the publishers of all other papers who insert advertisements of the same plays, can do it only by some surreptitious intelligence or hearsay, which frequently leads them to commit gross errors, as, mentioning one play for another, falsely representing the parts, &c., to the misinformation of the town, and the great detriment of the said theatre." And the *Public Advertiser* of January 1st, 1765, contains a notice: "To prevent any mistake in future

in advertising the plays and entertainments of Drury Lane Theatre, the managers think it proper to declare that the playbills are inserted by their direction in this paper only." It is clear that the science of advertising was but dimly understood at this date. Even the shopkeepers then paid for the privilege of exhibiting bills in their windows, whereas now they require to be rewarded for all exertions of this kind, by, at any rate, free admissions to the entertainments advertised, if not by a specific payment of money. The exact date when the managers began to pay instead of receive on the score of their advertisements, is hardly to be ascertained. Geneste, in his laborious "History of the Stage," says obscurely of the year 1745: "At this time the plays were advertised at three shillings and sixpence each night or advertisement in the *General Advertiser*." It may be that the adverse systems went on together for some time. The managers may have paid certain journals for the regular insertion of advertisements, and received payment from less favoured or less influential newspapers for theatrical news or information.

One of Charles Lamb's most pleasant papers arose from "the casual sight of an old playbill which I picked up the other day ; I know not by what chance it was preserved so long." It was but two-and-thirty years old, however, and presented the cast of parts in "Twelfth Night"

at Old Drury Lane Theatre, destroyed by fire in 1809. Lamb's delight in the stage needs not to be again referred to. "There is something very touching in these old remembrances," he writes. "They make us think how we once used to read a playbill, not as now, peradventure singling out a favourite performer and casting a negligent eye over the rest; but spelling out every name down to the very mutes and servants of the scene; when it was a matter of no small moment to us whether Whitfield or Packer took the part of Fabian; when Benson, and Burton, and Phillimore—names of small account—had an importance beyond what we can be content to attribute now to the time's best actors." The fond industry with which a youthful devotee of the theatre studies the playbills could hardly be more happily indicated than in this extract.

Mention of Old Drury Lane and its burning bring us naturally to the admirable "story of the flying playbill," contained in the parody of Crabbe, perhaps the most perfect specimen in that unique collection of parodies, "Rejected Addresses." The verses by the pseudo-Crabbe include the following lines:

Perchance while pit and gallery cry "Hats off!"
And awed consumption checks his chided cough,
Some giggling daughter of the Queen of Love
Drops, reft of pin, her playbill from above;
Like Icarus, while laughing galleries clap,
Soars, ducks, and dives in air the printed scrap;
But, wiser far than he, combustion fears;
And, as it flies, eludes the chandeliers;

Till, sinking gradual, with repeated twirl,
It settles, curling, on a fiddler's curl,
Who from his powdered pate the intruder strikes,
And, for mere malice, sticks it on the spikes.

"The story of the flying playbill," says the mock-preface, "is calculated to expose a practice, much too common, of pinning playbills to the cushions insecurely, and frequently, I fear, not pinning them at all. If these lines save one playbill only from the fate I have recorded, I shall not deem my labour ill employed."

Modern playbills may be described as of two classes, in-door and out-of-door. The latter are known also as "posters," and may thus manifest their connection with the early method of "setting up playbills upon posts." Shakespeare's audiences were not supplied with handbills as our present playgoers are; such of them as could read were probably content to derive all the information they needed from the notices affixed to the doors of the theatre, or otherwise publicly exhibited. Of late years the vendors of playbills, who were wont urgently to pursue every vehicle that seemed to them bound to the theatre, in the hope of disposing of their wares, have greatly diminished in numbers, if they have not wholly disappeared. Many managers have forbidden altogether the sale of bills outside the doors of their establishments. The indoor programmes are again divided into two kinds. To the lower-priced portions of the house an inferior bill is devoted; a folio sheet of thin paper, heavily laden and

strongly odorous with printers' ink. Visitors to the more expensive seats are now supplied with a scented bill of octavo size, which is generally, in addition, the means of advertising the goods and inventions of an individual perfumer. Attempts to follow Parisian example, and to make the playbill at once a vehicle for general advertisements and a source of amusing information upon theatrical subjects, have been ventured here occasionally, but without decided success. From time to time papers started with this object under such titles as the "Opera Glass," the "Curtain," the "Drop Scene," &c., have appeared, but they have failed secure a sufficiency of patronage. The playgoer's openness to receive impressions or information of any kind by way of employment during the intervals of representation, have not been unperceived by the advertiser, however, and now and then, as a result, a monstrosity called an "advertising curtain" has disfigured the stage. Some new development of the playbill in this direction may be in store for us in the future. The difficulty lies, perhaps, in the gilding of the pill. Advertisements by themselves are not very attractive reading, and a mixed audience cannot safely be credited with a ruling appetite merely for dramatic intelligence.

CHAPTER VI.

STROLLING PLAYERS.

IT is rather the public than the player that strolls nowadays. The theatre is stationary—the audience peripatetic. The wheels have been taken off the cart of Thespis: Hamlet's line, "Then came each actor on his ass," or the stage direction in the old "Taming of the Shrew" (1594)—"Enter two players with packs on their backs," no longer describes accurately the travelling habits of the histrionic profession. But of old the country folk had the drama brought as it were to their doors, and just as they purchased their lawn and cambric, ribbons and gloves, and other raiment and bravery of the wandering pedlar—the Autolycus of the period—so all their playhouse learning and experience they acquired from the itinerant actors. These were rarely the leading performers of the established London companies, however, unless it so happened that the capital was suffering

from a visitation of the plague. "Starring in the provinces" was not an early occupation of the players of good repute. As a rule, it was only the inferior actors who quitted town, and as Dekker contemptuously says, "travelled upon the hard hoof from village to village for cheese and buttermilk." "How chances it they travel?" inquires Hamlet concerning "the tragedians of the city"—"their *residence* both in reputation and profit were better both ways." John Stephens, writing in 1615, and describing "a common player," observes, "I prefix the epithet common to distinguish the base and artless appendants of our City companies, which oftentimes start away into rustical wanderings, and then, like Proteus, start back again into the City number." The strollers were of two classes, however. First, the theatrical companies protected by some great personage, wearing his badge or crest, and styling themselves his "servants"—just as to this day the Drury Lane troop, under warrant of Davenant's patent, still boast the title of "Her Majesty's Servants"—who attended at country seats, and gave representations at the request, or by the permission of the great people of the neighbourhood; and secondly, the mere unauthorised itinerants, with no claim to distinction beyond such as their own merits accorded to them, who played in barns, or in large inn-yards and rooms, and against whom was especially levelled the Act

of Elizabeth declaring that all players, &c., "not licensed by any baron or person of high rank, or by two justices of the peace, should be deemed and treated as rogues and vagabonds."

The suppression of the theatres by the Puritans reduced all the players to the condition of strollers of the lowest class. Legally their occupation was gone altogether. Stringent measures were taken to abolish stage-plays and interludes, and by an Act passed in 1647, all actors of plays for the time to come were declared rogues within the meaning of the Act of Elizabeth, and upon conviction were to be publicly whipped for the first offence, and for the second to be deemed incorrigible rogues, and dealt with accordingly; all stage galleries, seats, and boxes were to be pulled down by warrant of two justices of the peace; all money collected from the spectators was to be appropriated to the poor of the parish; and all spectators of plays, for every offence, fined five shillings. Assuredly these were very hard times for players, playhouses, and playgoers. Still the theatre was hard to kill. In 1648, a provost-marshal was nominated to stimulate the vigilance and activity of the lord mayor, justices, and sheriffs, and, among other duties, "to seize all ballad-singers and sellers of malignant pamphlets, and to send them to the several militias, and to suppress stage-plays." Yet, all this not-

withstanding, some little show of life stirred now and then in the seeming corpse of the drama. A few players met furtively, assembled a select audience, and gave a clandestine performance, more or less complete, in some obscure quarter. Secret Royalists and but half-hearted Puritans abounded, and these did not scruple to abet a breach of the law, and to be entertained now and then in the old time-honoured way.

With the Restoration, however, Thespis enjoyed his own again, and sock and buskin became once more lawful articles of apparel. Charles II. mounted the throne arm-in-arm, as it were, with a player-king and queen. The London theatres re-opened under royal patronage, and in the provinces the stroller was abroad. He had his enemies, no doubt. Prejudice is long-lived, of robust constitution. Puritanism had struck deep root in the land, and though the triumphant Cavaliers might hew its branches, strip off its foliage, and hack at its trunk, they could by no means extirpate it altogether. Religious zealotry, strenuous and stubborn, however narrow, had fostered, and parliamentary enactments had warranted hostility of the most uncompromising kind to the player and his profession. To many he was still, his new liberty and privileges notwithstanding, but "a son of Belial"—ever of near kin to the rogue and the vagabond, with the stocks and the whip-

ping-post still in his immediate neighbourhood, let him turn which way he would. And then, certainly, his occupation had its seamy side. With this the satirists, who loved censure rather for its wounding than its healing powers, made great play. They were never tired of pointing out and ridiculing the rents in the stroller's coat; his shifts, trials, misfortunes, follies, were subjects for ceaseless derision. What Grub-street and "penny-alining" have been to the vocation of letters, strolling and "barn-strutting" became to the histrionic profession—an excuse for scorn, under-rating, and mirth, more or less bitter.

Still strolling had its charms. To the beginner it afforded a kind of informal apprenticeship, with the advantage that while a learner of its mysteries, he could yet style himself a full member of the profession of the stage, and share in its profits. He was at once bud and flower. What though the floor of a ruined barn saw his first crude efforts, might not the walls of a patent theatre resound by-and-by with delighted applause, tribute to his genius? It was a free, frank, open vocation he had adopted; it was unprotected and unrestricted by legislative provisions in the way of certificates, passes, examinations, and diplomas. There was no need of ticket, or voucher, or preparation of any kind to obtain admission to the ranks of the players. "Can you shout?" a manager

once inquired of a novice. "Then only shout in the right places, and you'll do." No doubt this implied that even in the matter of shouting some science is involved. And there may be men who cannot shout at all, let the places be right or wrong. Still the stage can find room and subsistence of a sort for all, even for mutes. But carry a banner, walk in a procession, or form one of a crowd, and you may still call yourself actor, though not an actor of a high class, certainly. The histrionic calling is a ladder of many rungs. Remain on the lowest or mount to the highest—it is only a question of degree—you are a player all the same.

The Thespian army had no need of a recruiting-sergeant or a press-gang to reinforce its ranks. There have always been amateurs lured by the mere spectacle of the foot-lights, as moths by a candle. Crabbe's description of the strollers in his "Borough" was a favourite passage with Sir Walter Scott, and was often read to him in his last fatal illness :

Of various men these marching troops are made,
Pen-spurning clerks and lads contemning trade;
Waiters and servants by confinement teased,
And youths of wealth by dissipation eased;
With feeling nymphs who, such resource at hand,
Scorn to obey the rigour of command, &c. &c.

And even to the skilled and experienced actors a wandering life offered potent attractions. Apart from its liberty and adventure, its defiance of social convention and restraint,

ambition had space to stir, and vanity could be abundantly indulged in the itinerant theatre. Dekker speaks of the bad presumptuous players, who out of a desire to "wear the best jerkin," and to "act great parts, forsake the stately and more than Roman city stages," and join a strolling company. By many it was held better to reign in a vagrant than to serve in an established troop—preferable to appear as Hamlet in the provinces than to play Horatio or Guildenstern in town. And then, in the summer months, when the larger London houses were closed, strolling became a matter of necessity with a large number of actors; they could gain a subsistence in no other way. "The little theatre in the Haymarket," as it was wont to be called, which opened its doors in summer, when its more important neighbours had concluded their operations, could only offer engagements to a select few of their companies. The rest must needs wander. Whatever their predilections, they were strollers upon compulsion.

Indeed, strolling was only feasible during summer weather. Audiences could hardly be moved from their firesides in winter, barns were too full of grain to be available for theatrical purposes, and the players were then glad to secure such regular employment as they could, however slender might be the scale of their remuneration. There is a story told of a veteran and a tyro actor walking in the fields early in the year, when, suddenly, the elder ran from

the path, stopped abruptly, and planting his foot firmly upon the green-sward, exclaimed with ecstasy: "Three, by heaven! *that* for managers!" and snapped his fingers. His companion asked an explanation of this strange conduct. "You'll know before you have strutted in three more barns," said the "old hand." "In winter, managers are the most impudent fellows living, because they know we don't like to travel, don't like to leave our nests, fear the cold, and all that. But when I can put my foot upon three daisies—summer's near, and managers may whistle for me!"

The life was not dignified, perhaps, but it had certain picturesque qualities. The stroller toiling on his own account, "padding the hoof," as he called journeying on foot—a small bundle under his arm, containing a few clothes and professional appliances, wandered from place to place, stopping now at a fair, now at a tavern, now at a country house to deliver recitations and speeches, and to gain such reward for his labours as he might. Generally he found it advisable, however, to join a company of his brethren and share profits with them, parting from them again upon a difference of opinion or upon the receipts diminishing too seriously, when he would again rely upon his independent exertions. Sometimes the actor was able to hire or purchase scenes and dresses, the latter being procured generally from certain shops in Monmouth Street deal-

ing in cast clothes and tarnished frippery that did well enough for histrionic purposes ; then, engaging a company, he would start from London as a manager, to visit certain districts where it was thought that a harvest might be reaped. The receipts were divided among the troop upon a prearranged method. The impresario took shares in his different characters of manager, proprietor, and actor. Even the fragments of the candles that had lighted the representations were divided amongst the company. The inferior actors had the task allotted them of snuffing the candles in the course of the performance ; a service of danger sometimes, for rude audiences were apt to amuse themselves by pelting the candle-snuffers. As Shift observes in Foote's farce : "He that dares stand the shot of the gallery in lighting, snuffing, and sweeping, may bid defiance to the pillory with all its customary compliments." Permission had always to be sought of the local magnates before a performance could be given ; and the best-dressed and most cleanly-looking actor was deputed to make this application, as well as to conciliate the farmer or innkeeper, whose barn, stable, or great room was to be hired for the occasion. Churchill writes :

The strolling tribe, a despicable race,
Like wandering Arabs, shift from place to place.
Vagrants by law, to justice open laid,
They tremble, of the beadle's lash afraid ;
And fawning, cringe for wretched means of life
To Madame Mayoress or his worship's wife.

"I'm a justice of the peace and know how to deal with strollers," says Sir Tunbely, with an air of menace, in "The Relapse." The magistrates, indeed, were much inclined to deal severely with the wandering actor, eyeing his calling with suspicion, and prompt to enforce the laws against him. Thus we find in "Humphrey Clinker," the mayor of Gloucester, eager to condemn as a vagrant, and to commit to prison with hard labour, young Mr. George Dennison, who, in the guise of Wilson, a strolling player, has presumed to make love to Miss Lydia Melford, the heroine of the story.

In truth, the stroller's life, with all its seeming license and independence, must always have been attended with hardship and privation. If the player had ever deemed his art the "idle calling" many declared it to be, he was soon undeceived on that head. There was but a thin partition between him and absolute want; meanwhile his labour was incessant. The stage is a conservative institution, adhering closely to old customs, manners, and traditions, and what strolling had once been it continued to be almost for centuries. "A company of strolling comedians," writes the author of "The Road to Ruin," who had himself strolled in early life, "is a small kingdom, of which the manager is the monarch. Their code of laws seems to have existed, with little variation, since the days of Shakespeare."

Who can doubt that Hogarth's famous picture told the truth, not only of the painter's own time, but of the past and of the future? The poor player followed a sordid and wearisome routine. He was constrained to devote long hours to rehearsal and to the study of various parts, provided always he could obtain a sight of the book of the play, for the itinerant theatre afforded no copyist then to write neatly out each actor's share in the dialogues and speeches. Night brought the performance, and, for the player engaged as "utility," infinite change of dress and "making-up" of his face to personate a variety of characters. The company would, probably, be outnumbered by the *dramatis personæ*, in which case it would devolve upon the actor to assume many parts in one play. Thus, supposing Hamlet to be announced for representation, the stroller of inferior degree might be called upon to appear as Francisco, afterwards as a lord-in-waiting in the court scenes, then as Lucianus, "nephew to the king," then as one of the grave-diggers, then as a lord again, or, it might be, Osric, the fop, in the last act. Other duties, hardly less arduous, would fall to him in the after-pieces. "I remember," said King, the actor famous as being the original Sir Peter Teazle and Lord Ogleby, "that when I had been but a short time on the stage, I performed one night King Richard, sang two comic songs, played in an interlude, danced a hornpipe,

spoke a prologue, and was afterwards harlequin, in a sharing company, and after all this fatigue my share came to threepence and three pieces of candle!" A strolling manager of a later period was wont to boast that he had performed the complete melodrama of "Rob Roy" with a limited company of five men and three women. Hard-worked, ill-paid, and, consequently, ill-fed, the stroller must have often led a dreary and miserable life enough. The late Mr. Drinkwater Meadows used to tell of his experiences with a company that travelled through Warwickshire, and their treasury being empty, depended for their subsistence upon their piscatorial skill. They lived for some time, indeed, upon the trout streams of the county. They plied rod and line and learned their parts at the same time. "We could fish and study, study and fish," said the actor. "I made myself perfect in Bob Acres while fishing in the Avon, and committed the words to my memory quite as fast as I committed the fish to my basket."

The straits and necessities of the strollers have long been a source of entertainment to the public. In an early number of the "Spectator," Steele describes a company of poor players then performing at Epping. "They are far from offending in the impertinent splendour of the drama. 'Alexander the Great' was acted by a fellow in a paper cravat. The next day the Earl of Essex seemed to have no distress but his poverty; and my Lord Foppington

wanted any better means to show himself a fop than by wearing stockings of different colours. In a word, though they have had a full barn for many days together, our itinerants are so wretchedly poor that the heroes appear only like sturdy beggars, and the heroines gipsies." It is added that the stage of these performers "is here in its original situation of a cart." In the "Memoirs of Munden" a still stranger stage is mentioned. A strolling company performing in Wales had for theatre a bed-room, and for stage a large four-post bed! The spaces on either side were concealed from the audience by curtains, and formed the tiring-rooms of the ladies and gentlemen of the troop. On this very curious stage the comedian afterwards famous as Little Knight, but then new to his profession, appeared as Acres, in "The Rivals," and won great applause. Goldsmith's Strolling Player is made to reveal many of the smaller needs and shifts of his calling, especially in the matter of costume. "We had figures enough, but the difficulty was to dress them. The same coat that served Romeo, turned with the blue lining outwards, served for his friend Mercutio; a large piece of crape sufficed at once for Juliet's petticoat and pall; a pestle and mortar from a neighbouring apothecary answered all the purposes of a bell; and our landlord's own family, wrapped in white sheets, served to fill up the procession. In short,

there were but three figures among us that might be said to be dressed with any propriety; I mean the nurse, the starved apothecary, and myself." Of his own share in the representation the stroller speaks candidly enough: "I snuffed the candles, and let me tell you that without a candle-snuffer, the piece would lose half its embellishments." But there has always been forthcoming a very abundant supply of stories of this kind, not always to be understood literally, however, concerning the drama under difficulties, and the comical side of the player's indigence, distresses, and quaint artifices to conceal his poverty.

A word should be said as to the courage and enterprise of our early strollers. Traveling is nowadays so easy a matter that we are apt to forget how solemnly it was viewed by our ancestors. In the last century a man thought about making his will as a becoming preliminary to his journeying merely from London to Edinburgh. But the strollers were true to themselves and their calling, though sometimes the results of their adventures were luckless enough. "Our plantations in America have been voluntarily visited by some itinerants, Jamaica in particular," writes Chetwood, in his "History of the Stage" (1749). "I had an account from a gentleman who was possessed of a large estate in the island that a company in the year 1733 came there and cleared a large sum of money,

where they might have made moderate fortunes if they had not been too busy with the growth of the country. They received three hundred and seventy pistoles the first night of the 'Beggar's Opera,' but within the space of two months they buried their third Polly and two of their men. The gentlemen of the island for some time took their turns upon the stage to keep up the diversion; but this did not hold long; for in two months more there were but one old man, a boy, and a woman of the company left. The rest died either with the country distemper or the common beverage of the place, the noble spirit of rum-punch, which is generally fatal to new comers. The shattered remains, with upwards of two thousand pistoles in bank, embarked for Carolina to join another company at Charlestown, but were cast away in the voyage. Had the company been more blessed with the virtue of sobriety, &c., they might perhaps have lived to carry home the liberality of those generous islanders."

It is to be observed that the strolling profession had its divisions and grades. The "boothers," as they are termed, have to be viewed as almost a distinct class. These carry their theatre, a booth, about with them, and only pretend to furnish very abridged presentations of the drama. With them "Richard III.," for instance, is but an entertainment of some twenty minutes' duration. They are only

anxious to give as many performances as possible before fresh assemblies of spectators in as short a time as may be. "Boothers" have been known to give even six distinct exhibitions on Saturday nights. And they certainly resort to undignified expedients to lure their audiences. They parade in their theatrical attire, dance quadrilles and hornpipes, fight with broadswords, and make speeches on the external platform of their booth. Histrionic art is seen to little advantage under these conditions, although it should be said that many notable players have commenced the study of their profession among the "boothers." The travelling circus is again a distinct institution, its tumblers and riders only in a very distant and illegitimate way connected with even the humblest branches of the great Thespian family.

But strolling, in its old sense, is fast expiring. Barns have ceased to be temples of the drama. The railways carry the public to the established theatres; London stars and companies travelling in first-class carriages, with their secretary and manager, visit in turn the provincial towns, and attract all the players of the neighbourhood. The country manager, retaining but a few "utility people," is well content to lend his stage to these dignified players, who stroll only nominally, without "padding the hoof," or the least chance of hardship or privation attending their rustical

wanderings. Their travels are indeed more in the nature of royal progresses. Even for the "boothers" times have changed. Waste lands on which to "pitch" their playhouses are now hard to find; the "pleasure fairs," once their chief source of profit, become more and more rare; indeed, there is a prevalent disposition nowadays to abolish altogether those old-fashioned celebrations. And worse than all, perhaps, the audiences have become sophisticated and critical, and have not so much simple faith and hearty goodwill to place at the disposal of the itinerants. Centralisation has now affected the stage. The country is no longer the nursery and training-school of the player. He commences his career in London, and then regales the provinces with an exhibition of his proficiency. The strollers are now merged in the "stars." The apprentice is now the master, which may possibly account for the fact, that the work accomplished is not invariably of first-rate quality.

CHAPTER VII.

PAY HERE.

ACTING, as a distinct profession, seems to have been known in England at least as far back as the reign of Henry VI. There had been theatrical exhibitions in abundance, however, at a much earlier period. Stow, in his "Survey of London," in 1599, translates from the "Life of Thomas à Becket," by Fitzstephen, who wrote about 1182, mention of "the shews upon theatres and comical pastimes" of London, "its holy playes, representations of miracles which holy confessors have wrought, or representations of tormentes wherein the constancie of martirs appeared." As Mr. Payne Collier observes, "no country in Europe, since the revival of letters, has been able to produce any notice of theatrical performances of so early a date as England." But our primitive stage was a chapel-of-ease, as it were, to the Church. The plays were founded upon the lives of the saints, or upon the events of the Old and New

Testaments, and were contrived and performed by the clergy, who borrowed horses, harness, properties, and hallowed vestments from the monasteries, and did not hesitate even to paint and disguise their faces, in order to give due effect to their exhibitions, which were presented not only in the cathedrals, churches, and cemeteries, but also "on highways or greens," as might be most convenient. In 1511, for instance, the miracle-play of "St. George of Cappadocia" was acted in a croft, or field, at Basingborne, one shilling being paid for the hire of the land. The clergy, however, were by no means unanimous as to the propriety and policy of these dramatic representations. They were bitterly attacked in an Anglo-French poem, the "*Manuel de Péché*," written about the middle of the thirteenth century, and ascribed to Robert Grossetête, who became Bishop of Lincoln in 1235. Gradually the kind of histrionic monopoly which the church had long enjoyed was invaded. Education spread, and many probably found themselves as competent to act as the clergy. Still, the ecclesiastical performers for some time resisted all attempts to interfere with what they viewed as their especial privileges and vested interests. In 1378 the scholars or choristers of St. Paul's petitioned Richard II. to prohibit certain ignorant and inexperienced persons from acting the history of the Old Testament, to the prejudice of the clergy of

the Church, who had expended large sums in preparing plays founded upon the same subject. But some few years later the parish clerks of London, who had been incorporated by Henry III., performed at Skinner's Well, near Smithfield, in the presence of the king, queen, and nobles of the realm, a play which occupied three days in representation. As Warton remarks, however, in his "*History of English Poetry*," the parish clerks of that time might fairly be regarded as a "literary society," if they did not precisely come under the denomination of a religious fraternity.

The religious or miracle plays soon extended their boundaries, became blended with "mummings," or "disguisings," and entertainments of pageantry. Morals, interludes, and masques were gradually brought upon the scene. Dancers, singers, jugglers, and minstrels became indispensable to the performances. The Church and the Theatre drifted apart; were viewed in time as wholly independent establishments. The actor asserted his individuality; his profession was recognised as distinct and complete in itself; companies of players began to stroll through the provinces. The early moral-play of the "*Castle of Perseverance*," which is certainly as old as the reign of Henry VI., was represented by itinerant actors, who travelled round the country for that purpose, preceded by their standard-bearers and trumpeters, to announce on what day, and at

what hour, the performance would take place. It would seem that the exhibition concluded at nine o'clock in the morning, so that the play-goers of the period must probably have assembled so early as six. In the reign of Edward IV. the actors first obtained parliamentary recognition. The Act passed in 1464, regulating the apparel to be worn by the different classes of society, contains special exception in favour of henchmen, pursuivants, sword-bearers to mayors, messengers, minstrels, and "players in their interludes." The first royal personage who entertained a company of players as his servants was probably Richard III. when Duke of Gloucester, who seems, moreover, to have given great encouragement to music and musicians. In the reign of Henry VII. dramatic representations were frequent in all parts of England. The king himself had two companies of players, the "gentlemen of the chapel," and his "players of interludes."

The early actors, whose performances took place in the open air or in public places, doubtless obtained recompense for their labours much after the manner of our modern street exhibitors: by that system of "sending round the hat," which too many lookers-on nowadays consider as an intimation to depart about their business, leaving their entertainment unpaid for. The companies of players in the service of any great personage were in the receipt of regular

salaries, were viewed as members of his household, and wore his livery. They probably obtained, moreover, largess from the more liberally disposed spectators of their exertions. But as the theatre became more and more a source of public recreation, it was deemed necessary to establish permanent stages, and a tariff of charges, for admission to witness the entertainments. For a long time the actors had been restricted to the mansions of the nobility, and to the larger inn-yards of the city. In 1574, however, the Earl of Leicester, through his influence with Queen Elizabeth, obtained for his company of players, among whom was included James Burbadge, the father of the famous Shakespearian actor, Richard Burbadge, a patent, under the great seal, empowering the actors, "during the queen's pleasure, to use, exercise, and occupy the art and faculty of playing tragedies, comedies, interludes, and stage plays, as well for the recreation of the queen's subjects as for her own solace and pleasure, within the city of London and its liberties, and within any cities, towns, and boroughs throughout England." This most important concession to the players was strenuously opposed by the Lord Mayor and Corporation, who maintained that "the playing of interludes and the resort to the same" were likely to provoke "the infection of the plague," were "hurtfull in corruption of youth," were "great wasting both of the time.

and thrift of many poor people," and "great withdrawing of the people from publique prayer and from the service of God." At last they proposed, as a compromise, that the players of the queen, or of Lord Leicester—for these titles seem to have been bestowed upon the actors indifferently—should be permitted to perform within the City boundaries upon certain special conditions, to the effect that their names and number should be notified to the Lord Mayor and the Justices of Middlesex and Surrey, and that they should not divide themselves into several companies; that they should be content with playing in private houses, at weddings, &c., without public assemblies, or "if more be thought good to be tolerated," that they should not play openly till the whole deaths in London had been for twenty days under fifty a week; that they should not play on the Sabbath or on holy days until after evening prayer; and that no playing should be in the dark, "nor continue any such time but as any of the auditoire may returne to their dwellings in London before sonne-set, or at least before it be dark." These severe restrictions so far defeated the objects of the civic powers, that they led in truth to the construction of three theatres beyond the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction, but sufficiently near to its boundaries to occasion him grave disquietude. About 1576 Burbadge built his theatre in the Liberty of the Blackfriars—a precinct in which civic

authority was at any rate disputed. Within a year or so *The Curtain* and *The Theatre*, both in Shoreditch, were also opened to the public. The Mayor and Corporation persistently endeavoured to assert authority over these establishments, but without much practical result. It may be added that the Blackfriars Theatre was permanently closed in 1647, part of the ground on which it stood, adjoining Apothecaries' Hall, still bearing the name of Playhouse Yard; that the theatre in Shoreditch was abandoned about 1598 (it was probably a wooden erection, and in twenty years might have become untenantable); and that *The Curtain* fell into disuse at the beginning of the reign of Charles I.

The prices of admission to the theatres varied according to the estimation in which they were held, and were raised on special occasions. "Twopenny rooms," or galleries, were to be found at the larger and more popular theatres. In Goffe's "*Careless Shepherdess*," 1656, acted at the Salisbury Court Theatre, appear the lines—

I will hasten to the money-box
And take my shilling out again;
I'll go to the Bull or Fortune, and there see
A play for twopence and a jig to boot.

The money received was placed in a box, and there seems to have been one person specially charged with this duty. Dekker, dedicating one of his plays to his "friends

and fellows," the queen's servants, wishes them "a full audience and one honest door-keeper." Even thus early the absolute integrity of the attendants of the theatre would appear to have been a subject of suspicion. "Penny galleries" are referred to by some early writers, and from a passage in the "Gull's Horn Book," 1609—"Your groundling and gallery commoner buys his sport for a penny"—it is apparent that the charges for admission to the yard, where the spectators stood, and to the galleries, where they sat on benches, were the same. In Dekker's "Satiromastix," one of the characters speaks scornfully of "penny bench theatres," where a gentleman or an honest citizen "might sit with his squirrel by his side cracking nuts." But according to the Induction to Ben Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair," first acted in 1614, at the Hope, a small dirty theatre on the Bank-side, which had formerly been used for bear-baiting, the prices there ranged from sixpence to half-a-crown. "It shall be lawful for any man to judge his six pen'worth, his twelve pen'worth, so to his eighteen pence, two shillings, half-a-crown, to the value of his place; provided always his place get not above his wit . . . Marry, if he drop but sixpence at the door, and will censure a crown's worth, it is thought there is no conscience or justice in that." So in the Induction to his "Magnetic Lady," Jonson speaks of

"Your people that sit in the oblique caves and wedges of your house, your sinful sixpenny mechanicks." It is probable, however, that the dramatist was referring to the prices charged at the first representation of his play. Sixpence might then be the lowest admission; on other occasions, twopence, or even one penny.

The prologue to "Henry VIII." states—

Those that come to see
Only a show or two, and so agree,
The play may pass; if they be still and willing,
I'll undertake, may see away their shilling
Richly in two short hours.

And there is evidence that in Shakespeare's time one shilling was the price of admission to the best rooms or boxes. Sir Thomas Overbury writes in his "Characters," published in 1614: "If he have but twelve pence in his purse he will give it for the best room in a play-house." And the "Gull's Horn Book," 1609, counsels, "At a new play you take up the twelvepenny room next the stage, because the lords and you may seem to be hail-fellow well met!"

But it is plain that the tariff of admissions was subject to frequent alterations, and that as money became more abundant, the managers gradually increased their charges. In the "Scornful Lady" "eighteen pence" is referred to as though it were the highest price of admission to the Blackfriars Theatre. Sir John Suck-

ling writes, about the middle of the seventeenth century—

The sweat of learned Jonson's brain,
And gentle Shakespeare's easier strain,
A hackney-coach conveys you to,
In spite of all that rain can do,
And for your eighteenpence you sit,
The lord and judge of all fresh wit.

It must always be doubtful, however, as to the precise portion of the theatre these writers intended to designate. As Mr. Collier suggests, the discordances between the authorities on this question arise, probably, from the fact that "different prices were charged at different theatres at different periods."

In our early theatres, the arrangements for receiving the money of the playgoers were rather of a confused kind. There would seem to have been several doors, one within the other, at any of which visitors might tender their admission money. It was understood that he who, disapproving the performance, withdrew after the termination of the first act of the play, was entitled to receive back the amount he had paid for his entrance. This system led to much brawling and fraud. The matter was deemed important enough to justify royal intervention. An order was issued in 1665, reciting that complaints had been made by "our servants, the actors in the Royal Theatre," of divers persons refusing to pay at the first door of the said theatre, thereby

obliging the doorkeepers to send after, solicit, and importune them for their entrance-money, and stating it to be the royal will and pleasure, for the prevention of these disorders, and so that such as are employed by the said actors might have no opportunity of deceiving them, that all persons thenceforward coming to the said theatre should at the first door pay their entrance-money, which was to be restored to them again in case they returned the same way before the end of the act. The guards attending the theatre, and all others whom it might concern, were charged to see that this order was obeyed, and to return to the Lord Chamberlain the names of such persons as offered "any violence contrary to this our pleasure."

Apparently the royal decree was not very implicitly obeyed by the playgoers. At any rate we find, under date January 7th, 1668, the following entry in Mr. Pepys's "Diary" bearing upon the matter: "To the Nursery, but the house did not act to-day; and so I to the other two playhouses, into the pit to gaze up and down, and there did by this means for nothing see an act in the 'School of Compliments,' at the Duke of York's house, and 'Henry IV.' at the King's House; but not liking either of the plays, I took my coach again and home." At the trial of Lord Mohun, in 1692, for the murder of Mountford, the actor, John Rogers, one of the doorkeepers of

the theatre, deposes that he applied to his lordship and to Captain Hill, his companion, "for the overplus of money for coming in, because they came out of the pit upon the stage. They would not give it. Lord Mohun said if I brought any of our masters he would slit their noses." It was the fashion for patrons of the stage at this time to treat its professors with great scorn, and often to view them with a kind of vindictive jealousy. "I see the gallants do begin to be tired with the vanity and pride of the theatre actors, who are indeed grown very proud and rich," noted Pepys, in 1661. In the second year of her reign, Queen Anne issued a decree "for the better regulation of the theatres," the drama being at this period the frequent subject of royal interference, and strictly commanded that "no person of what quality soever should presume to go behind the scenes, or come upon the stage, either before or during the acting of any play; that no woman should be allowed, or presume to wear, a vizard mask in either of the theatres; and that no person should come into either house without paying the price established for their respective places."

As the stage advanced more and more in public favour, the actors ceased to depend for existence upon private patronage, and found it unnecessary to be included among the retinue and servants of the great. After the Restoration patents were granted to Killigrew and

Davenant, and their companies were described as the servants of the King and of the Duke of York respectively ; but individual noblemen no longer maintained and protected "players of interludes" for their own private amusement. And now the Court began to come to the drama instead of requiring that the drama should be invariably carried to the Court. Charles II. was probably the first English monarch who habitually joined with the general audience and occupied a box at a public theatre. In addition, he followed the example of preceding sovereigns, and had plays frequently represented before him at Whitehall and other royal residences. These performances took place at night, and were brilliantly lighted with wax candles. The public representations were in the afternoon, and usually illumined with some three pounds of tallow candles, although Killigrew claimed credit for introducing "wax candles, and many of them," at the Theatre Royal. With the fall of the Stuart dynasty the Court theatricals ceased almost altogether. Indeed, in Charles's time there had been much decline in the dignity and exclusiveness of these entertainments ; admission seems to have been obtainable upon payment at the doors, as though at a public theatre. Evelyn writes in 1675 : "I saw the Italian Scaramuccio act before the king at Whitehall, people giving money to come in, which was very scandalous, and never so

before at Court diversions. Having seen him act in Italy many years past, I was not averse from seeing the most excellent of that kind of folly."

It is to be observed that in Pepys's time, and long afterwards, the prices of admission to the theatres were: boxes four shillings, pit two shillings and sixpence, first gallery one shilling and sixpence, and upper gallery one shilling. He records, in 1667, his occupying a seat in the boxes for the first time in his life, and alludes with regret to the number of "ordinary apprentices and mean people," he observes, "in the pit at two shillings and sixpence apiece; I going for several years no higher than the twelvepence, and the eighteenpence, though I strained hard to go in then when I did." In 1661 he was "troubled to be seen by four of our office clerks which sat in the half-crown boxes and I in the one shilling gallery." It long continued to be the custom to raise the prices whenever great expenses had been incurred by the manager in the production of a new play or of a pantomime. A disturbance in Drury Lane Theatre in 1744, on account of the alleged capriciousness of the manager in varying his tariff of charges, led to a notification in the playbills to the effect that "whenever a pantomime or farce shall be advertised, the advanced prices shall be returned to those who do not choose to stay." As the patent theatres were enlarged

or rebuilt, however, the higher rate of charges became permanently established. After the famous O.P. riots the scale agreed upon was : Boxes, seven shillings ; pit, three shillings ; galleries, two shillings and one shilling ; with half-price at nine o'clock. In later times these charges have been considerably reduced. Half price has been generally abolished, however, and many rows of the pit have been converted into stalls at seven shillings each, or even more. Altogether, it may perhaps be held that in western London, although theatrical entertainments have been considerably cheapened, they still tax the pockets of playgoers more severely than need be.

Country managers would seem to have ruled their scale of charges in strict accordance with the means of their patrons ; to have been content, indeed, with anything they could get from the provincial playgoers. Mr. Bernard, the actor, in his "Retrospections," makes mention of a strolling manager, once famous in the north of England and in Ireland, and known popularly as Jemmy Whitely, who, in impoverished districts, was indifferent as to whether he received the public support in money or "in kind." It is related of him that he would take meat, fowl, vegetables, &c., and pass in the owner and friends for as many admissions as the food was worth. Thus very often on a Saturday his treasury resembled a butcher's warehouse, rather than a banker's. At a vil-

lage on the coast the inhabitants brought him nothing but fish ; but as the company could not subsist without its concomitants of bread, potatoes, and spirits, a general appeal was made to his stomach and sympathies, and some alteration in the terms of admission required. Jemmy, accordingly, after admitting nineteen persons one evening for a shad apiece, stopped the twentieth, and said, "I beg your pardon, my darling, I am extremely sorry to refuse you ; but if we eat any more fish, by the powers, we shall all be turned into mermaids !"

A famous provincial manager, or "manageress," was one Mrs. Baker, concerning whom curious particulars are related in the "Memoirs of Thomas Dibdin," and in the "Life of Grimaldi, the Clown." The lady owned theatres at Canterbury, Rochester, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Feversham, Deal, and other places, but was understood to have commenced her professional career in connection with a puppet-show, or even the homely entertainment of Punch and Judy. But her industry, energy, and enterprise were of an indomitable kind. She generally lived in her theatres, and rising early to accomplish her marketing and other household duties, she proceeded to take up her position in the box-office, with the box-book open before her, and resting upon it "a massy silver inkstand, which, with a superb pair of silver trumpets, several cups, tankards, and candle-

sticks of the same pure metal, it was her honest pride to say she had paid for with her own hard earnings." While awaiting the visits of those desirous to book their places for the evening, she arranged the programme of the entertainments. Her education was far from complete, however, for although she could read she was but an indifferent scribe. By the help of the scissors, needle, thread, and a bundle of old playbills, she achieved her purpose. She cut a play from one bill, an interlude from another, a farce from a third, and sewing the slips neatly together avoided the use of pen and ink. When the name of a new performer had to be introduced she left a blank to be filled up by the first of her actors she happened to encounter, presuming him to be equal to the use of a pen. She sometimes beat the drum, or tolled the bell behind the scenes, when the representation needed such embellishments, and occasionally fulfilled the duties of prompter. In this respect it was unavoidable that she should be now and then rather overtasked. On one special evening she held the book during the performance of the old farce of "Who's the Dupe?" The part of Gradus was undertaken by her leading actor, one Gardner, and in the scene of Gradus's attempt to impose upon the gentleman of the story, by affecting to speak Greek, the performer's memory unfortunately failed him. He glanced appealingly towards the prompt-side

of the stage. Mrs. Baker was mute, examining the play-book with a puzzled air. "Give me the word, madam," whispered the actor. "It's a hard word, Jem," the lady replied. "Then give me the next?" "That's harder." The performer was at a stand-still; the situation was becoming desperate. "The next," cried Gardner, furiously. "Harder still!" answered the prompter, and then, perplexed beyond bearing, she flung the book on the stage, and exclaimed aloud: "There, now you have them all; take your choice."

The lady's usual station was in front of the house, however. She was her own money-taker, and to this fact has been ascribed the great good fortune she enjoyed as a manager. "Now then, pit or box, pit or gallery, box or pit!" she cried incessantly. "Pit! Pit!" half-a-dozen voices might cry. "Then pay two shillings. Pass on, Tom Fool!" for so on busy nights she invariably addressed her patrons of all classes. To a woman who had to quit the theatre, owing to the cries of the child she bore in her arms disturbing the audience, Mrs. Baker observed, as she returned the entrance-money, "Foolish woman! Foolish woman! Don't come another night till half-price, and then give your baby some Dalby's Carminative." "I remember," writes Dibdin, "one very crowded night, patronised by a royal duke at Tunbridge Wells, when Mrs. Baker was taking money for three doors at

once, her anxiety and very proper tact led her, while receiving cash from one customer, to keep an eye in perspective on the next, to save time, as thus : ' Little girl ! get your money ready, while this gentleman pays. My lord ! I'm sure your lordship has silver. Let that little boy go in while I give his lordship change. Shan't count after your ladyship. Here comes the duke ! Make haste ! His royal highness will please to get his ticket ready while my lady—now, sir ! Now your royal highness ! ' ' Oh dear, Mrs. Baker, I've left my ticket in another coat-pocket ! ' ' To be sure you have ! Take your royal highness's word ! Let his royal highness pass ! His royal highness has left his ticket in his *other* coat-pocket.' Great laughter followed, and I believe the rank and fashion of the evening found more entertainment in the lobby than on the stage."

On the occasion of Grimaldi's engagement, "for one night only," it was found necessary to open the doors of the Maidstone Theatre at a very early hour, to relieve the thoroughfare of the dense crowd which had assembled. The house being quite full, Mrs. Baker locked up the box in which the receipts of the evening had been deposited, and, going round to the stage, directed the performances to be commenced forthwith, remarking, reasonably enough, "that the house could but be full, and being full to the ceiling now, they might

just as well begin at once, and have business over so much the sooner." Greatly to the satisfaction of the audience, the representation accordingly began without delay, and terminated shortly after nine o'clock.

It should be added that Mrs. Baker had been a dancer in early life, and was long famed for the grace of her carriage and the elegance of her curtsey. Occasionally she ventured upon the stage dressed in the bonnet and shawl she had worn while receiving money and issuing checks at the door, and in audible tones announced the performances arranged for future evenings, the audience enthusiastically welcoming her appearance. A measure of her manifold talents was shared by other members of her family. Her sister, Miss Wakelin, was principal comic dancer to the theatre, occasional actress, wardrobe-keeper, and professed cook, being rewarded for her various services by board and lodging, a salary of £1 11s. 6d. per week, and a benefit in every town Mrs. Baker visited, with other emoluments by way of perquisites. Two of Mrs. Baker's daughters were also members of her company, and divided between them the heroines of tragedy and comedy. One Miss Baker subsequently became the wife of Mr. Dowton, the actor.

A settled distrust of the Bank of England was one of Mrs. Baker's most marked peculiarities. At the close of the performance she

resigned the position she had occupied for some five hours as money-taker for pit, boxes, and gallery, and retired to her chamber, carrying the receipts of the evening in a large front pocket. This money she added to a store contained in half-a-dozen large china punch-bowls, ranged upon the top shelf of an old bureau. For many years she carried her savings about with her from town to town, sometimes retaining upon her person gold in rouleaux to a large amount. She is even said to have kept in her pocket for seven years a note for £200. At length her wealth became a positive embarrassment to her. She deposited sums in country banks and in the hands of respectable tradesmen, at three per cent., sometimes without receiving any interest whatever, but merely with a view to the safer custody of her resources. It was with exceeding difficulty that she was eventually persuaded to become a fundholder. She handed over her store of gold to her stockbroker with extraordinary trepidation. It is satisfactory to be assured that at last she accorded perfect confidence to the Old Lady in Threadneedle Street, increased her investments from time to time, and learned to find pleasure in visiting London half-yearly to receive her dividends.

Altogether Mrs. Baker appears to have been a thoroughly estimable woman, cordially regarded by the considerate members of the theatrical profession with whom she had deal-

ings. While recording her eccentricities, and conceding that occasionally her language was more forcible and idiomatic than tasteful or refined, Dibdin hastens to add that "she owned an excellent heart, with much of the appearance and manners of a gentlewoman." Grimaldi was not less prompt in expressing his complete satisfaction in regard to his engagements with "the manageress." Dibdin wrote the epitaph inscribed above her grave in the cathedral yard of Rochester. A few lines may be extracted, but it must be said that the composition is of inferior quality :

Alone, untaught,
And self-assisted (save by Heaven), she sought
To render each his own, and fairly save
What might help others when she found a grave ;
By prudence taught life's troubled waves to stem,
In death her memory shines, a rich, unpolished gem.

It is conceivable—so much may perhaps be added by way of concluding note—that Mrs. Baker unconsciously posed as a model, and lent a feature or two, when the portrait came to be painted of even a more distinguished "manageress," whose theatre was a caravan, however, whose company consisted of waxen effigies, and who bore the name of—Jarley.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE PIT.

THERE is something to be written about the rise and fall of the pit : its original humility, its possession for awhile of great authority, and its forfeiture, of late years, of power in the theatre. We all know Shakespeare's opinion of "the groundlings," and how he held them to be, "for the most part, capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise." The great dramatist's contemporaries entertained similar views on this head. They are to be found speaking with supreme contempt of the audience occupying the *yard* ; describing them as "fools," and "scarecrows," and "understanding, grounded men."

Our old theatres were of two classes : public and private. The companies of the private theatres were more especially under the protection of some royal or noble personage. The audiences they attracted were usually of a superior class, and certain of these were

entitled to sit upon the stage during the representation. The buildings, although of smaller dimensions than the public theatres boasted, were arranged with more regard for the comfort of the spectators. The boxes were enclosed and locked. There were *pits* furnished with seats, in place of the *yards*, as they were called, of the public theatres, in which the "groundlings" were compelled to stand throughout the performance. And the whole house was roofed in from the weather; whereas the public theatres were open to the sky, excepting over the stage and boxes. Moreover, the performances at the private theatres were presented by candle or torchlight. Probably it was held that the effects of the stage were enhanced by their being artificially illuminated, for in these times, at both public and private theatres, the entertainments commenced early in the afternoon, and generally concluded before sunset, or, at any rate, before dark.

As patience and endurance are more easy to the man who sits than to the standing spectator, it came to be understood that a livelier kind of entertainment must be provided for the "groundlings" of the public theatres than there was need to present to the seated pit of the private playhouse. The "fools of the yard" were charged with requiring "the horrid noise of target-fight," "cutler's work," and vulgar and boisterous exhibitions generally. These early patrons of the more practical parts

of the drama are entitled to be forbearingly judged, however. Their comfort was little studied, and it is not surprising, under the circumstances, that they should have favoured a brisk and vivacious class of representations. The tedious playwright did not merely oppress their minds; he made them remember how weary were their legs.

But it is probable that the tastes thus generated were maintained long after the necessity for their existence had departed, and that, even when seats were permitted them, the "groundlings" still held by their old forms of amusement, demanding dramas of liveliness, incident, and action, and greatly preferring spectacle to speeches. From the philosophical point of view the pit had acquired a bad name, and couldn't or wouldn't get quit of it. Still it is by no means clear that the sentiments ascribed to the pit were not those of the audience generally. The cry of "the decline of the stage" began to be heard almost as soon as the smallest pains were taken with the accessories of theatrical exhibitions. "The introduction of scenery," writes Mr. Payne Collier, "gives the date to the commencement of the decline of our dramatic poetry." The imagination was no longer appealed to. To the absence of painted canvas we owe many of the finest descriptive passages of Shakespeare, his contemporaries, and followers. But this impeachment of the scene-painter affects also the

costumier, and indeed stage illusion of all kinds. The difficulty of defining exactly how much to leave to the imagination, and how far to gratify the eye, is very great indeed, and would seem to be no more soluble now than ever it was.

But the pit was a convenient scapegoat. It was long charged with being a foe to wit and poetry ; with preferring sound to sense, and especially with delighting in pageantry and scenic magnificence. Thus Pope, in his "Imitations of Horace," discourses of the subject :

There still remains to mortify a wit
The many-headed monster of the pit,
A senseless, worthless, and unhonoured crowd,
Who, to disturb their betters mighty proud,
Clattering their sticks before ten lines are spoke
Call for the farce, the bear, or the black joke.

* * * * *

The play stands still; d—n action and discourse,
Back fly the scenes and enter foot and horse.
Pageants on pageants in long order drawn,
Peers, heralds, bishops, ermine, gold, and lawn.
The champion too, and to complete the jest,
Old Edward's armour gleams on Cibber's breast.

It seems that "Henry VIII." had lately been represented, and the play-houses had vied with each other in portraying the pomp and splendour of a coronation. The armour of one of the kings of England had even been borrowed from the Tower to clothe the champion, an important figure in the ceremonial. It is noteworthy that Pope's attack upon spectacle makes no mention of the scenery of the stage. He is too much occupied with the costumes, with

“Quin’s high plume,” the remnant of the “forest of feathers,” to which Hamlet refers as the fitting gear of the players, and “Oldfield’s petticoat :”

Loud as the wolves on Orcas’ stormy steep
Howl to the roarings of the northern deep,
Such is the shout, the long applauding note
At Quin’s high plume or Oldfield’s petticoat.
Or when from court a birthday suit bestowed
Sinks the lost actor in the tawdry load.
Booth enters—hark ! the universal peal !
“But has he spoken ?” Not a syllable.
“What shook the stage and made the people stare ?”
Cato’s long wig, flower’d gown, and lacquer’d chair.

We hear numerous complaints nowadays of the extravagant garniture of the modern stage, and these may be just and reasonable enough very likely. It is as well, however, to remember sometimes their ancient date and the prolonged existence they have enjoyed. The first spangle that glittered on the boards probably brought with it the cry against spectacle, and the prediction that the utter ruin of the theatre was of a certainty impending.

But, Pope’s diatribe notwithstanding, the pit was improving in character. It could now boast a strong critical leaven ; it was becoming the recognised resort of the more enlightened play-goers. Dryden in his prologues and epilogues often addresses the pit, as containing notably the judges of plays and the more learned of the audience. “The pit,” says Swift, in the introduction to his “Tale of a Tub,” “is sunk below the stage, that whatever

of weighty matter shall be delivered thence, whether it be lead or gold, may fall plump into the jaws of certain critics, as I think they are called, which stand ready open to devour them." "Your bucks of the pit," says an old occasional address of later date, ascribed to Garrick, but on insufficient evidence—

Your bucks of the pit are miracles of learning,
Who point out faults to show their own discerning;
And critic-like bestriding martyred sense,
Proclaim their genius and vast consequence.

There were now critics by profession, who duly printed and published their criticisms. The awful Churchill's favourite seat was in the front row of the pit, next the orchestra. "In this place he thought he could best discern the real workings of the passions in the actors, or what they substituted in the stead of them," says poor Tom Davies, whose dread of the critic was extreme. "During the run of 'Cymbeline,' " he wrote apologetically to Garrick, his manager, "I had the misfortune to disconcert you in one scene, for which I did immediately beg your pardon; and did attribute it to my accidentally seeing Mr. Churchill in the pit; with great truth, it rendered me confused and unmindful of my business." Garrick had himself felt oppressed by the gloomy presence of Churchill, and learnt to read discontent in the critic's lowering brows. "My love to Churchill," he writes to Colman; "his

being sick of Richard was perceived about the house."

That Churchill was a critic of formidable aspect, the portrait he limned of himself in his "Independence" amply demonstrates :

Vast were his bones, his muscles twisted strong,
His face was short, but broader than 'twas long ;
His features though by nature they were large,
Contentment had contrived to overcharge
And bury meaning, save that we might spy
Sense low'ring on the pent-house of his eye ;
His arms were two twin oaks, his legs so stout
That they might bear a mansion-house about ;
Nor were they—look but at his body there,
Designed by fate a much less weight to bear.
O'er a brown cassock which had once been black,
Which hung in tatters on his brawny back,
A sight most strange and awkward to behold,
He threw a covering of blue and gold, &c. &c.

This was not the kind of man to be contemptuously regarded or indiscreetly attacked. Foote ventured to designate him "the clumsy curate of Clapham," but prudently suppressed a more elaborate lampoon he had prepared. Murphy launched an ode more vehement than decent in its terms. Churchill good-humouredly acknowledged the justice of the satire ; he had said, perhaps, all he cared to say to the detriment of Murphy, and was content with this proof that his shafts had reached their mark. Murphy confirms Davies's account of Churchill's seat in the theatre :

No more your bard shall sit
In foremost row before the astonished pit,
And grin dislike, and kiss the spike,
And twist his mouth and roll his head awry,
The arch-absurd quick glancing from his eye.

Charles Lamb was a faithful patron of the pit. In his early days there had been such things as "pit orders." "Beshrew the uncomfortable manager who abolished them!" he exclaims. It was from the front row of the pit that Lamb, seated by the side of his dearly-loved sister, applauded the first and hissed the second act of his own farce, "Mr. H——," an unlucky little play, failing mainly from an inherent weakness of constitution, and yet containing much that is witty and comical.

Hazlitt greatly preferred the pit to the boxes. Not simply because the fierceness of his democratic sentiments induced in him a scorn of the visitors to the boxes, as wrapped up in themselves, fortified against impressions, weaned from all superstitious belief in dramatic illusions, taking so little interest in all that is interesting, disinclined to discompose their cravats or their muscles, "except when some gesticulation of Mr. Kean, or some expression of an author two hundred years old, violated the decorum of fashionable indifference." These were good reasons for his objection to the boxes. But he preferred the pit, in truth, because he could there see and hear so very much better. "We saw Mr. Kean's 'Sir Giles Overreach' on Friday night from the boxes," he writes in 1816, "and are not surprised at the incredulity as to this great actor's powers entertained by those persons who have only seen him from that elevated sphere. We do

not hesitate to say that those who have only seen him at that distance have not seen him at all. The expression of his face is quite lost, and only the harsh and grating tones of his voice produce their full effect on the ear. The same recurring sounds, by dint of repetition, fasten on the attention, while the varieties and finer modulations are lost in their passage over the pit. All you discover is an abstraction of his defects, both of person, voice, and manner. He appears to be a little man in a great passion," &c.

But the pit was not famous merely as the resort of critics. The "groundlings" had given place to people of fashion and social distinction. Mr. Leigh Hunt notes that the pit even of Charles II.'s time, although now and then the scene of violent scuffles and brawls, due in great part to the general wearing of swords, was wont to contain as good company as the pit of the Opera House five-and-twenty years ago. A reference to Pepys's "Diary" justifies this opinion. "Among the rest here was the Duke of Buckingham to-day openly sat in the pit," records Pepys, "and there I found him with my Lord Buckhurst, and Sedley, and Etheridge the poet." Yet it would seem that already the visitors to the pit had declined somewhat in quality. Concerning a visit to the "Duke of York's Play - House," Pepys writes: "Here a mighty company of citizens, 'prentices and others; and it makes me observe

that when I began first to be able to bestow a play on myself, I do not remember that I saw so many by half of the ordinary 'prentices and mean people in the pit at two shillings and sixpence apiece as now ; I going for several years no higher than the shilling, and then the eighteenpenny places, though I strained hard to go in them when I did ; so much the vanity and prodigality of the age is to be observed in this particular." Pepys, like John Gilpin's spouse, had a frugal mind, however bent on pleasure. He relates, with some sense of injury, how once, there being no room in the pit, he was forced to pay 4s. and go into one of the upper boxes, "which is the first time I ever sat in a box in my life. And this pleasure I had, that from this place the scenes do appear very fine indeed, and much better than in the pit."

One does not now look to find members of the administration or cabinet ministers occupying seats in the pit. Yet the "Journals of the Right Honourable William Windham," some time Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and afterward Colonial Secretary, tell of his frequent visits to the pit of Covent Garden. Nor does he "drop into" the theatre, after dining at his club, as even a bachelor of fashion might do without exciting surprise. Play-going is not an idle matter to him. And he is accompanied by ladies of distinction, his relatives and others. "Went about half-past five to the pit," he

records ; "sat by Miss Kemble, Steevens, Mrs. Burke, and Miss Palmer," the lady last named being the niece of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who afterwards married Lord Inchiquin. "Went in the evening to the pit with Mrs. Lukin" (the wife of his half-brother). "After the play, went with Miss Kemble to Mrs. Siddons' dressing-room : met Sheridan there, with whom I sat in the waiting-room, and who pressed me to sup at his house with Fox and G. North." Assuredly "the play," not less than the pit, was more highly regarded in Windham's time than nowadays.

Though apart from our present topic, it is worth noting that Windham may claim to have anticipated Monsieur Gambetta as a statesman voyaging in a balloon. Ballooning was a hobby of Windham's. He was a regular attendant of ascents, and inspected curiously the early aërial machines of Blanchard and Lunardi. Something surprised at his own temerity, he travelled the air himself, rose in a balloon—probably from Vauxhall—crossed the river at Tilbury, and descended in safety after losing his hat. He regretted that the wind had not been favourable for his crossing the Channel. "Certainly," he writes, "the experiences I have had on this occasion will warrant a degree of confidence more than I have ever hitherto indulged. I would not wish a degree of confidence more than I enjoyed at every moment of the time."

To return to the pit for a concluding note or two. Audiences had come to agree with Hazlitt, that "it was unpleasant to see a play from the boxes," that the pit was far preferable. Gradually the managers—sound sleepers as a rule—awakened to this view of the situation, and proceeded accordingly. They seized upon the best seats in the pit, and converted them into stalls, charging for admission to these a higher price than they had ever levied in regard to the boxes. Stalls were first introduced at the Opera House in the Haymarket in the year 1829. Dissatisfaction was openly expressed, but although the overture was hissed—the opera being Rossini's "*La Donna del Lago*"—no serious disturbance arose. There had been a decline in the public spirit of play-goers. The generation that delighted in the great O. P. riot had pretty well passed away. Such another excitement was not possible; energy and enthusiasm on such a subject seemed to have been exhausted for ever by that supreme effort. So the audience paid the increased price or stayed away from the theatre—for staying away from the theatre could now be calmly viewed as a reasonable alternative. "The play" was no more what once it had been, a sort of necessary of life. The example of the Opera manager was presently followed by all other theatrical establishments, and high-priced stalls became the rule everywhere. The pit lost its old influence—was, so to say, dis-

franchised. It was as one of the old Cinque Ports which the departing sea and the ever in-drifting sand have left high and dry, unapproachable by water, a port only in name. It was divided and conquered. The most applauded toast at the public banquet of the O. P. rioters—"The ancient and indisputable rights of the pit"—will never more be proposed.

A Churchill sitting in a modern stall is not a conceivable figure. A new Rosciad would hardly find a publisher or a public. Satire, to make a stir, must lash something that is loved or hated; it is but wasting words, time, and trouble to employ it on a subject the world views with indifference. The spirit of criticism has almost departed from the theatre. The pit of to-day, penned back beneath the shadow of the boxes, is content to applaud any and everything. The stalls, languid and apathetic, are much what Hazlitt described the boxes of his time to be. They sit apart in the high-priced places, solemn, still, and not too comfortable. For it is the manager's plan—a short-sighted plan, but managers are short-sighted—to deal hardly by their patrons, to wring from them as much as possible, and risk their withdrawing altogether from the scene. Yet there is a fable about killing the goose that lays the golden eggs, and there is a homely proverb, which says, "Once bit, twice shy." The stalls of our theatres are so closely wedged and jammed together, that they can

scarcely be reached without a most unseemly and almost painful struggle. The Britannic figure is apt to be substantial, and needs room to move in. Some creature of genius invented a plan of adding a hinge to the seats of the stall-chairs, so that they might be raised upon occasion, and, forming a kind of bay, give more standing room to the occupant of the stall. The managers forthwith made this scheme an excuse for encroaching on the passage room between the rows of stalls, and crowding in additional seats. It is now required of the occupants of stalls that they should rise up, lift the seats of their chairs, and retire into the recess thus formed in order that others may pass them. The holder of stall number ten, let us say, comes to the theatre a little late. It is incumbent upon the sitters in stalls numbered one to nine to go through this severe drill with their chairs, so that number ten may duly reach his seat. This is simply outrageous. Protests generally are of little avail, but we venture a protest on this head. The most prosperous manager in the end will assuredly be he who, even at some seeming sacrifice of his own interests, does most to make his audience comfortable. The rude, plain, hard benches of the old-fashioned pit are preferable to this modern system. They did not, at any rate, pretend to be luxurious and exclusive, and they were certainly less costly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOOTMEN'S GALLERY.

OF old the proprietors of theatres acted towards their patrons upon the principle of "first come first served." If you desired a good place at the play-house it was indispensably necessary to go early and to be in time: to secure your seat by bodily occupation of it. Box-offices, at which places might be engaged a fortnight in advance of the performance, were as yet unknown. The only way, therefore, by which people of quality and fashion could obtain seats without the trouble of attending at the opening of the doors for that purpose, was by sending on their servants beforehand to occupy places until such time as it should be convenient for the masters and mistresses to present themselves at the theatre. When Garrick took his benefit at Drury Lane in 1744, the play—"Hamlet"—was to begin at six o'clock, and in the bills of the day ladies were requested *to send their servants by three*

o'clock. It was further announced that by particular desire five rows of the pit would be railed into boxes, and that servants would be permitted to keep places on the stage, which, for the better accommodation of the ladies, would be railed into boxes.

The custom of sending servants early to the theatre to secure seats in this way, was, no doubt, a very old one ; and, of course, at the conclusion of the entertainment they were compelled to be again in attendance with the carriages and chairs of their employers. Meanwhile, they assembled in the lobbies and precincts of the play-house in great numbers, and considerable noise and confusion thus ensued. In the prologue to Cartell's tragic-comedy of "*Arviragus*," 1672, Dryden writes, begging the public to support rather the English than the French performers who were visiting London :

And therefore, Messieurs, if you'll do us grace,
Send lacqueys early to preserve your place ;

and in one of his epilogues he makes mention of the nuisance occasioned by the noisy crowd of servants disturbing the performance :

Then for your lacqueys and your train beside,
By whate'er name or title dignified,
They roar so loud, you'd think behind the stairs,
Tom Dove and all the brotherhood of bears :
They've grown a nuisance beyond all disasters,
We've none so great but their unpaying masters.
We beg you, sirs, to beg your men that they
Would please to give us leave to hear the play.

"Tom Dove," it may be noted, was a "bearward," or proprietor of bears, of some fame; his name is frequently mentioned in the light literature of the period.

At this time the servants were admitted gratis to the upper gallery of the theatre on the conclusion of the fourth act of the play of the evening. In 1697, however, Rich, the manager of the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, placed his gallery at their disposal, without charge, during the whole of the evening. Cibber speaks of this proceeding on the part of Rich as the lowest expedient to ingratiate his company in public favour. Alarmed by the preference evinced by the town for the rival theatre in Drury Lane, Rich conceived that this new privilege would incline the servants to give his house "a good word in the respective families they belonged to," and, further, that it would greatly increase the applause awarded to his performances. In this respect his plan seems to have succeeded very well.

Cibber relates that "it often thundered from the full gallery above, while the thin pit and boxes below were in the utmost serenity." He proceeds to add, however, that the privilege, which from custom ripened into right, became the most disgraceful nuisance that ever depreciated the theatre. "How often," he exclaims, "have the most polite audiences in the most affecting scenes of the best plays been

disturbed and insulted by the noise and clamour of these savage spectators !”

The example set by Rich seems to have been soon followed by other managers. For many years the right of the footmen to occupy the upper gallery without payment was unchallenged. In 1737, however, Mr. Fleetwood, manager of Drury Lane Theatre, announced his determination to put an end to a privilege which it was generally felt had grown into a serious nuisance. A threatening letter was sent to him, which he answered by offering a reward of fifty guineas for the discovery of its author or authors. The letter is given in full in Malcolm's "Anecdotes of London," 1810 :

“SIR,—We are willing to admonish you before we attempt our design ; and, provided you will use us civil and admit us into your gallery, which is our property according to Formalities ; and if you think proper to come to a composition this way, you'll hear no further ; and if not, our intention is to join a body *incognito*, and reduce the play-house to the ground.—We are, INDEMNIFIED.”

A riot of an alarming nature followed. The footmen, denied admission to their own gallery, as they regarded it, assembled in a body of 300, and, armed with offensive weapons, broke into the theatre, and, taking

forcible possession of the stage, wounded some twenty-five persons who had opposed their entrance. Great confusion prevailed. The Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family were in the theatre at the time. Colonel Deveil, justice of the peace, who was also present, after attempting in vain to read the Riot Act ("he might as well have read Cæsar's 'Commentaries,'" observed a facetious critic), caused some of the ringleaders to be arrested, and thirty of them were sent to Newgate. While in prison, they were supported by the subscriptions of their sympathising brethren. Meanwhile, anonymous letters were thrown down the areas of people of fashion, denouncing vengeance against all who attempted to deprive the footmen of their liberty and property. A further attack upon the theatre was expected. For several nights a detachment of fifty soldiers protected the building and its approaches; but the public peace was not further disturbed. The footmen were compelled to acknowledge themselves defeated. They were admitted *gratis* to the upper gallery no more.

Arnot's "History of Edinburgh," 1789, contains an account of a servants' riot in the theatre of that city on the occasion of the second performance of the Rev. Mr. Townley's farce of "High Life Below Stairs," originally played at Drury Lane in 1759. The footmen, highly offended at the representation of a

farce reflecting on their fraternity, resolved to prevent its repetition. In Edinburgh the footmen's gallery still existed. "That servants might not be kept waiting in the cold, nor induced to tipple in the adjacent ale-houses while they waited for their masters, the humanity of the gentry had provided that the upper gallery should afford gratis admission to the servants of such persons as were attending the theatre." On the second night of the performance of the farce, Mr. Love, one of the managers of the theatre, came upon the stage, and read a letter he had received, containing the most violent threatenings both against the actors and the house, in case "High Life Below Stairs" should be represented, and declaring "that above seventy people had agreed to sacrifice fame, honour, and profit to prevent it." In spite of this menace, however, the managers ordered that the performance should proceed. Immediately a storm of disapprobation arose in the footmen's gallery. The noise continued, notwithstanding the urgent orders addressed to the servants to be quiet. Many of the gentlemen recognised among this unruly crew their individual servants. When these would not submit to authority, their masters, assisted by others in the house, went up to the gallery; but it was not until after a battle, in which the servants were fairly overpowered and thrust out of the house, that quietness was restored.

After this disturbance, the servants were not only deprived of the freedom of the play-house, but the custom of giving them "vails," which had theretofore universally prevailed in Scotland, was abolished. "Nothing," writes Mr. Arnot, "can tend more to make servants rapacious, insolent, and ungrateful, than allowing them to display their address in extracting money from the visitors of their lord." After the riot in the footmen's gallery, the gentlemen of the county of Aberdeen resolved neither to give, nor to allow their servants to receive, any money from their visitors under the name of drink-money, card-money, &c., and instead, augmented their wages. This example was "followed by the gentlemen of the county of Edinburgh, by the Faculty of Advocates, and other respectable public bodies; and the practice was utterly exploded over all Scotland."

It was not only while they occupied the gallery, however, that the footmen contrived to give offence to the audience. Their conduct while they kept places for their employers in the better portions of the house, appears to have been equally objectionable. In the *Weekly Register* for March 25th, 1732, it is remarked: "The theatre should be esteemed the centre of politeness and good manners, yet numbers of them [the footmen] every evening are lolling over the boxes, while they keep places for their masters, with their hats

on; play over their airs, take snuff, laugh aloud, adjust their cocks'-combs, or hold dialogues with their brethren from one side of the house to the other." The fault was not wholly with the footmen, however: their masters and mistresses were in duty bound to come earlier to the theatre and take possession of the places retained for them. But it was the fashion to be late: to enter the theatre noisily, when the play was half over, and even then to pay little attention to the players. In Fielding's farce of "Miss Lucy in Town," produced in 1742, when the country-bred wife inquires of Mrs. Tawdry concerning the behaviour of the London fine ladies at the play-houses, she is answered: "Why, if they can they take a stage-box, where they let the footman sit the two first acts to show his livery; then they come in to show themselves—spread their fans upon the spikes, make curtsies to their acquaintance, and then talk and laugh as loud as they are able."

CHAPTER X.

FOOT-LIGHTS.

As the performances of the Elizabethan theatres commenced at three o'clock in the afternoon, and the public theatres of the period were open to the sky (except over the stage and galleries), much artificial lighting could not, as a rule, have been requisite. Malone, in his account of the English stage prefixed to his edition of "Shakespeare," describes the stage as formerly lighted by means of two large branches "of a form similar to those now hung in churches." The pattern of these branches may be seen in the frontispiece to "Kirkman's Collection of Drolls," printed in 1672, representing a view of a theatrical booth. In time, however, it was discovered that the branches obstructed the view of the spectators, and were otherwise inconvenient; they then gave place to small circular wooden frames furnished with candles, eight of which were hung on the stage, four on either side. The frontispiece to the Dublin edition

of Chetwood's "History of the Stage," 1749, exhibits the stage lighted by hoops of candles in this way, suspended from the proscenium, and with no foot-lights between the actors and the musicians in the orchestra. It is probable that these candles were of wax or tallow, accordingly as the funds of the theatrical manager permitted. Mr. Pepys, in his "Diary," February 12th, 1667, chronicles a conversation with Killigrew, the manager of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. "He tells me that the stage is now, by his pains, a thousand times better and more glorious than ever heretofore. *Now, wax candles and many of them; then, not above 3 lb. of tallow.* Now, all things civil: no rudeness anywhere; then, as in a bear-garden. Then, two or three fiddlers; now, nine or ten of the best. Then, nothing but rushes on the ground, and everything else mean; now, all otherwise," &c. The body of the house, according to Malone, was formerly lighted "by cressets or large open lanthorns of nearly the same size with those which are fixed in the poop of a ship."

The use of candles involved the employment of candle-snuffers, who came on at certain pauses in the performance to tend and rectify the lighting of the stage. Goldsmith's Strolling Player narrates how he commenced his theatrical career in this humble capacity: "I snuffed the candles; and let me tell you, that without a candle-snuffer the piece would lose half its

embellishments." The illness of one of the actors necessitated the pressing of the candle-snuffer into the company of players. "I learnt my part," he continues, "with astonishing rapidity, and bade adieu to snuffing candles ever after. I found that nature had designed me for more noble employment, and I was resolved to take her when in the humour." But the duties of a candle-snuffer, if not very honourable, were somewhat arduous. It was the custom of the audience, especially among those frequenting the galleries, to regard him as a butt, with whom to amuse themselves during the pauses between the acts. Something of this habit is yet extant. Even nowadays the appearance of a servant on the stage for the necessary purposes of the performance—to carry chairs on or off, to spread or remove a carpet, &c.—is frequently the signal for cries of derision from the gallery. Of old the audience proceeded to greater extremities—even to hurling missiles of various kinds at the unfortunate candle-snuffer. In Foote's comedy of the "Minor," Shift, one of the characters, describes the changing scenes of his life. From a linkboy outside a travelling theatre he was promoted to employment within. "I did the honours of the barn," he says, "by sweeping the stage and clipping the candles. Here my skill and address was so conspicuous that it procured me the same office the ensuing winter, at Drury Lane, where I acquired intrepidity,

the crown of all my virtues. . . . For I think, sir, he that dares stand the shot of the gallery, in lighting, snuffing, and sweeping, the first night of a new play, may bid defiance to the pillory with all its customary compliments But an unlucky crab-apple applied to my right eye by a patriot gingerbread baker from the Borough, who would not suffer three dances from Switzerland because he hated the French, forced me to a precipitate retreat."

Mr. Richard Jenkins, in his "Memoirs of the Bristol Stage," published in 1826, relates how one Winstone, a comic actor, who sometimes essayed tragical characters, appeared upon a special occasion as Richard III. He played his part so energetically, and flourished his sword to such good purpose while demanding "A horse! a horse!" in the fifth act that "the weapon coming in contact with a rope by which one of the hoops of tallow candles was suspended, the blazing circle (not the golden one he had looked for) fell round his neck and lodged there, greatly to his own discomfiture and to the amusement of the audience." The amazed Catesby of the evening, instead of helping his sovereign to a steed, is said to have been sufficiently occupied with extricating him from his embarrassing situation. Winstone, indeed, seems to have enjoyed some fame on the score of eccentricity. He took leave of the stage in 1784, being then

about eighty years of age. But he was at this time so afflicted with deafness that it was impossible for him to "catch the word" from the prompter at the side of the stage. To assist him, therefore, in the delivery of his farewell address, one of the performers, provided with a copy of the speech, was stationed behind the speaker and instructed to keep moving forward and backward as he did, like his shadow. The effect must certainly have been whimsical. Winstone had been a pupil of Quin's, and had played Downright to Garrick's Kiteley in "Every Man in his Humour," at Drury Lane, in 1751. He was a constant attendant at the Exchange Coffee House, the established resort of the Bristol merchants. "He had the good fortune at one time to win a considerable prize in the lottery, and often looked in at the insurance offices, where he sometimes received premiums as an underwriter of ships and cargoes." In consequence, he obtained much patronage, and always inserted at the head of the playbills of his benefit, "By desire of several eminent merchants."

Garrick, in 1765, after his return from Italy (according to Jackson's "History of the Scottish Stage"), introduced various improvements in the theatre, and amongst them, the employment of a row of foot-lights in lieu of the old circular chandeliers overhead. The labours of the candle-snuffers in front of the curtain were probably brought to a conclusion soon after-

wards, when oil-lamps took the place of candles. The snuffer then found his occupation gone. Probably the trimming of the lamps became his next duty ; and then, as time went on, he developed into the "gasman," that most indispensable attendant of the modern theatre.

Thackeray, in his novel of "The Virginians," has some very apposite remarks upon the limited state of illumination in which our ancestors were content to dwell. "In speaking of the past," he writes, "I think the night-life of society a hundred years since was rather a *dark* life. There was not one wax-candle for ten which we now see in a ladies' drawing-room : let alone gas and the wondrous new illuminations of clubs. Horrible guttering tallow smoked and stunk in passages. The candle-snuffer was a notorious officer in the theatre. See Hogarth's pictures : how dark they are, and how his feasts are, as it were, begrimed with tallow ! In 'Mariage à la Mode,' in Lord Viscount Squanderfield's grand saloons, where he and his wife are sitting yawning before the horror-stricken steward when their party is over, there are but eight candles—one on each table and half-a-dozen in a brass chandelier. If Jack Briefless convoked his friends to oysters and beer in his chambers, Pump Court, he would have twice as many. Let us comfort ourselves by thinking that Louis Quatorze in all his glory held his revels in the dark, and bless Mr. Price and

other Luciferous benefactors of mankind for abolishing the abominable mutton of our youth."

The first gas-lamp appeared in London in the year 1809, Pall Mall being the first and for some years the only street so illuminated. Gradually, however, the new mode of lighting made way, and stole from the streets into manufactories and public buildings, and, finally, into private houses. The progress was not very rapid, however; for we find that gas was not introduced into the Mall of St. James's Park until the year 1822. It is difficult to fix the exact date when gas foot-lights appeared upon the stage. But in the year 1828 an explosion took place in Covent Garden Theatre by which two men lost their lives. Great alarm was excited. The public were afraid to re-enter the theatre. The management published an address in which it was stated that the gasfittings would be entirely removed from the interior of the house, and safer methods of illumination resorted to. In order to effect the necessary alterations the theatre was closed for a fortnight, during which the Covent Garden company appeared at the English Opera House, or Lyceum Theatre, and an address was issued on behalf of the widows of the men who had been killed by the explosion. In due time, however, the world grew bolder on the subject, and gas reappeared upon the scene. Some theatres, however

(being probably restricted by the conditions of their leases), were very tardy in adopting the new system of lighting. Mr. Benjamin Webster, in his speech in the year 1853, upon his resigning the management of the Haymarket Theatre after a tenancy of fifteen years, mentions, among the improvements he had originated during that period, that he had "introduced gas for the fee of £500 a year, and the presentation of the centre chandelier to the proprietors."

The employment of gas-lights in theatres was strenuously objected to by many people. In the year 1829 a medical gentleman, writing from Bolton Row, and signing himself "Chiro-Medicus," addressed to a public journal a remonstrance on the subject. He had met with several fatal cases of apoplexy which had occurred in the theatres, or a few hours after leaving them, and he had been led, with some success, as he alleged, to investigate the cause. It appeared to him "that the strong vivid light evolved from the numerous gas-lamps on the stage so powerfully stimulated the brain through the medium of the optic nerves, as to occasion a preternatural determination of blood to the head, capable of producing headache or giddiness ; and if the subject should at the time laugh heartily, the additional influx of blood which takes place, may rupture a vessel, the consequence of which will be, from the effusion of blood within the substance of the brain,

or on its surface, fatal apoplexy." From inquiries he had made among his professional brethren who had been many years in practice in the Metropolis, it appeared to him that the votaries of the drama were by no means so subject to apoplexy or nervous headache *before* the adoption of gas-lights. Some of his medical friends were of opinion that the air of the theatre was very considerably deteriorated by the combustion of gas, and that the consumption of oxygen, and the new products, and the escape of hydrogen, occasioned congestion of the vessels of the head. He thought it probable that this deterioration of the air might act in conjunction with the vivid light in producing either apoplexy or nervous headache. He found, moreover, that the actors were subject not only to headache, but also to weakness of sight and attacks of giddiness, from the action of the powerfully vivid light evolved from the combustion of gas; and he noted that the pupils of the eyes of all actors or actresses, who had been two or three years on the stage, were much dilated; though this, he thought, might be attributable to the injurious pigments they employed to heighten their complexions; common rouge containing either red oxide of lead or the sulphuret of mercury, and white paint being often composed of carbonate of lead, all of which were capable of acting detrimentally upon the optic nerve.

The statements of "Chiro-Medicus" may seem

somewhat overcharged ; yet, after allowance has been made for that exaggerated way of putting the case which seems habitual to "the faculty" when it takes up with a new theory, a sufficient residuum of fact remains to justify many of the doctor's remarks. That a headache too often follows hard upon a dramatic entertainment must be tolerably plain to anyone who has ever sat in a theatre. Surely, a better state of things must have existed a century ago, when the grandsires and great grandsires of us Londoners were in the habit of frequenting the theatres night after night, almost as punctually as they ate their dinner or sipped their claret or their punch. To look in at Drury Lane or Covent Garden, if only to witness an act or two of the tragedy or comedy of the evening, was a sort of duty with the town gentlemen, wits, and Templars, a hundred years back, when George III. was king. But gas had not then superseded wax, and tallow, and oil. No constitution could stand a nightly course of the vitiated atmosphere of the theatres as they exist at present. A visit now and then is all we may permit ourselves ; and we may deem ourselves fortunate if the merit of the entertainment on such occasions is sufficient compensation for the almost inevitable headache it entails upon us. Modern managers, indeed, have not been properly heedful to make the ventilation of their houses keep pace with the illumination ; and this has, of late years, been

excessive—not merely on the stage, but more inexcusably and unnecessarily in the “auditorium” of the theatre. “Chiro-Medicus” did not succeed in his efforts made nearly fifty years ago to “turn off the gas.” But if apoplexy was imminent in those days of comparative darkness, what must it be now when great flare and glitter, and gas-flooded spectacles, seem to be indispensable to the stage, and when, moreover, in lieu of the old-fashioned chandeliers diffusing the light, “sun-burners” from above shoot down fierce concentrated rays upon the devoted heads of the audience? Reform is very necessary in this matter. Apoplectic seizures may not threaten the spectators so certainly as has been stated, but aching brows and distressed eyes, unavoidable under the existing system, are sufficient afflictions to warrant a demand for improvement. Cannot we come to some compromise with the managers? Let them make their stages as bright as they list if they will but leave the “auditorium” in twilight, and make that twilight as temperate, without draughtiness, as may be.

Beyond increasing the *quantity* of light, stage management has done little since Garrick’s introduction of foot-lights, or “floats,” as they are technically termed, in the way of satisfactorily adjusting the illumination of the stage. The light still comes from the wrong place: from below instead of, naturally, from above.

In 1863, Mr. Fechter, at the Lyceum, sunk the *floats* below the surface of the stage, so that they should not intercept the view of the spectator ; and his example has been followed by other managers ; and of late years, owing to accidents having occurred to the dresses of the dancers when they approached too near to the foot-lights, these have been carefully fenced and guarded with wire screens and metal bars. Moreover, the dresses of the performers have been much shortened. But the obvious improvement required still remains to be effected.

George Colman the younger, in his "Random Records," describes an amateur dramatic performance in the year 1780, at Wynnstay, in North Wales, the seat of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn. The theatre had formerly been the kitchen of the mansion ; a large, long, rather low-pitched room. One advantage of these characteristics, according to Mr. Colman, was the fact that the foot-lights, or *floats*, could be dispensed with : the stage was lighted by a row of lamps affixed to a large beam or arch above the heads of the performers—"on that side of the arch nearest to the stage, so that the audience did not see the lamps, which cast a strong vertical light upon the actors. This," he writes, "is as we receive light from nature ; whereas the operation of the *float* is exactly upon a reversed principle, and throws all the shades of the actor's countenance the wrong way." This defect, however, appeared to our

author to be irremediable ; for, as he argues, "if a beam to hold lamps as at Wynnstay was placed over the proscenium at Drury Lane or Covent Garden Theatre, the goddesses in the upper tiers of boxes, and the two and one shilling gods in the galleries, would be completely intercepted from a view of the stage." Still, Mr. Colman was not without hope that "in this age of improvement, while theatres are springing up like mushrooms, some ingenious architect may hit upon a remedy. At all events," he concludes, "it is a grand desideratum."

Colman was writing in the year 1830. It is rather curious to find him describing theatres as "springing up like mushrooms," when it is considered that, notwithstanding the enormous extension of London, and the vast increase of its population, but one or two theatres were added to it for some thirty years. Meanwhile, the "ingenious architect," to whom he looked hopefully to amend the lighting of the stage, has not yet appeared. But then, one does not meet ingenious architects every day.

A concluding note may be added touching the difficulties that may ensue from the system of lighting the theatres by means of gas.

On December 3rd, 1872, there occurred the strike of some 2,400 stokers ; and, as a consequence, the West-End of London was

involved in complete darkness, while in the City the supply of gas was limited to a very few streets. Upon the theatres this deprivation fell heavily. The performances were given up in despair at some houses, and carried on at others in a very restricted manner, by suddenly calling into requisition the twilight of tallow-candles and oil-lamps. The following advertisements, among many others of like tenor, appearing in the *Times* of the 4th December, are illustrative of the situation of affairs :

SPECIAL NOTICE.—COURT THEATRE.—This theatre, from its situation, is in no way affected by the Gas Strike, and will be open every evening, and brilliantly illuminated.

ST. JAMES'S THEATRE.—The management having received no notice that, in consequence of the strike, the supply of gas would be discontinued, found at the last moment no light could be obtained, and were compelled to inform the crowds at the door that there would be no performance. *All Tickets* issued last night will be available this evening.

GAS.—GAIETY.—SPECIAL NOTICE.—Arrangements (if necessary) have been made to light this Theatre with lime-lights and oil.

CHAPTER XI.

“COME, THE RECORDERS!”

AMONG the earlier emotions of the youthful playgoer, whose enthusiasm for dramatic representations is generally of a very fervid and uncompromising kind, must be recognised his pity for the money-taker, forbidden by the cares of office to witness a performance, and his envy of the musicians, so advantageously stationed for the incessant enjoyment of the delights of the theatre. But he perceives, with regretful wonder, that these gentlemen are habitually negligent of their opportunities, and fail to appreciate the peculiar happiness of their position; that they are apt, indeed, their services not being immediately required, to abandon their instruments, and quietly to steal away through the cramped doorway that admits to the mysterious regions beneath the stage. He is grieved to note that for them, at any rate, the play is *not* “the thing.” One or two may remain—the performer on the

drum, I have observed, is often very faithful in this respect, though I have failed to discover any special reason why a love of histrionic efforts should be generated by his professional occupation—but the majority of the orchestra clearly manifest an almost indecent alacrity in avoiding all contemplation of the displays on the other side of the foot-lights. They are but playgoers on compulsion. They even seem sometimes, when they retain their seats, to prefer gazing at the audience, rather than at the actors, and thus to advertise their apathy in the matter. And I have not heard that the parsimonious manager, who proposed to reduce the salaries of his musicians on the ground that they every night enjoyed admission to the best seats, for which they paid nothing, "even when stars were performing," ever succeeded in convincing his band of the justice of his arguments.

The juvenile patron of the drama will, of course, in due time become less absorbed in his own view of the situation, and learn that, just as one man's meat is another man's poison, so the pleasures of some are the pains of others. He will cease to search the faces of the orchestra for any evidence of "pride of place," or enjoyment of performances they witness, not as volunteers, but as pressed men. He will understand that they are at work, and are influenced by a natural anxiety to escape from work as soon as may be. So, the overture

ended, they vanish, and leave the actors to do their best or their worst, as the case may be. But our young friend's sentiments are not peculiar to himself—have been often shared, indeed, by very experienced persons. We have heard of comic singers and travelling entertainment givers who have greatly resented the air of indifference of their musical accompanist. They have required of him that he should feel amused, or affect to feel amused, by their efforts. He has had to supplement his skill as a musician by his readiness as an actor. It has been thought desirable that the audience should be enabled to exclaim : “The great So-and-So *must* be funny ! Why, see the man at the piano, who plays for him every night, who has, of course, seen his performance scores and scores of times, even *he* can't help laughing, the great So-and-So is so funny.” The audience, thus convinced, find themselves, no doubt, very highly amused. Garrick himself appears, on one occasion, at any rate, to have been much enraged at the indifference of a member of his band. Cervetto, the violoncello player, once ventured to yawn noiselessly and portentously while the great actor was delivering an address to the audience. The house gave way to laughter. The indignation of the actor could only be appeased by Cervetto's absurd excuse that he invariably yawned when he felt “the greatest rapture,” and to this emotion the address to the house, so admirably delivered

by his manager, had justified him in yielding. Garrick accepted the explanation, perhaps rather on account of its humour than of its completeness.

Music and the drama have been inseparably connected from the most remote date. Even in the cart of Thespis some corner must have been found for the musician. The custom of chanting in churches has been traced to the practice of the ancient and pagan stage. Music pervaded the whole of the classical drama, was the adjunct of the poetry: the play being a kind of recitation, the declamation composed and written in notes, and the gesticulations even being accompanied. The old miracle plays were assisted by performers on the horn, the pipe, the tabret, and the flute; a full orchestra in fact. Mr. Payne Collier, in his "*Annals of the Stage*," points out that at the end of the prologue to "*Childermas Day*," 1512, the minstrels are required to "do their diligence," the same expression being employed at the close of the performance, when they are besought either themselves to dance, or to play a dance for the entertainment of the company:

Also ye menstrelles doth your diligence
Afore our departyng geve us a daunce.

The Elizabethan stage relied greatly upon the aid of trumpets, cornets, &c., for the "soundings" which announced the commencement of the prologue, and for the "alarums" and

"flourishes" which occurred in the course of the representation. Malone was of opinion that the band consisted of some eight or ten musicians stationed in "an upper balcony over what is now called the stage-box." Collier, however, shows that the musicians were often divided into two bands, and quotes a stage direction in Marston's "Antonio's Revenge," 1602: "While the measure is dancing, Andrugio's ghost is placed betwixt the music houses." In a play of later date, Middleton's "Chaste Maid in Cheapside," 1630, appears the direction: "While the company seem to weep and mourn, there is a sad song in the music room." Boxes were then often called rooms, and one was evidently set apart for the use of the musicians. In certain of Shakespeare's plays the musicians are clearly required to quit their room for a while, and appear upon the stage among the *dramatis personæ*.

The practice of playing music between the acts is of long standing, the frequent inappropriateness of these interludes having been repeatedly commented on, however. A writer in the last century expressly complains that at the end of every act, the audience, "carried away by a jig of Vivaldi's, or a concerto of Giardini's, lose every warm impression relative to the piece, and begin again cool and unconcerned as at the commencement of the representation." He advocates the introduction of

music adapted to the subject: "The music after an act should commence in the tone of the preceding passion, and be gradually varied till it accords with the tone of the passion that is to succeed in the next act," so that "cheerful, tender, melancholy, or animated impressions" may be inspired, as the occasion may need. At the conclusion of the second act of "*Gammer Gurton's Needle*," 1566, Diccon, addressing himself to the musicians, says simply, "In the meantime, fellows, pipe up your fiddles." But in a later play, the "*Two Italian Gentlemen*," by Anthony Munday, printed about 1584, the different kinds of music to be played after each act are stated, whether "a pleasant galliard," a "solemn dump," or a "pleasant allemaigne." So Marston, in his "*Sophonisba*," 1606, indicates particularly the instruments he would have played during the pauses between the acts. After act one, "the cornets and organs playing loud full of music;" after act two, "organs mixed with recorders;" after act three, "organs, viols, and voices;" with "a base lute and a treble viol" after act four. In the course of this play, moreover, musical accompaniments of a descriptive kind were introduced, the stage direction on two occasions informing us that "infernall music plays softly." Nabbes, in the prologue to his "*Hannibal and Scipio*," 1637, alludes at once to the change

of the place of action of the drama, and to the performance of music between the acts :

The place is sometimes changed, too, with the scene,
Which is transacted as the music plays
Betwixt the acts.

The closing of the theatres by the Puritans, in 1642, plainly distressed the musicians almost as much as the players. Their occupation was practically gone, although not declared illegal by Act of Parliament. "Our music," writes the author of the "Actor's Remonstrance," 1643, "that was held so delectable and precious that they scorned to come to a tavern under twenty shillings for two hours, now wander with their instruments under their cloaks—I mean such as have any—into all houses of good fellowship, saluting every room where there is company with, 'Will you have any music, gentlemen?'"

At the Restoration, however, king, actors, and orchestra all enjoyed their own again. Presently, for the first time it would seem in an English theatre, the musicians were assigned that intrenched position between the pit and the stage they have ever since maintained. "The front of the stage is opened, and the band of twenty-four violins with the harpsicals and theorbos which accompany the voices are placed between the pit and the stage. While the overture is playing the curtain rises and discovers a new frontispiece joined to the great pilasters on each side of the stage," &c. So

runs one of the preliminary stage directions in the version of Shakespeare's "Tempest," arranged by Dryden and Davenant for performance at the Duke's Theatre, Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1667. The change was, no doubt, introduced by Davenant in pursuance of French example. The authors of the "Histoire Universelle des Théâtres" state, regarding the French stage, that after the disuse of the old chorus in 1630, "à la place du chant qui distinguoit les actes et qui marquoit les repos nécessaires, on introduisit des joueurs d'instrumens, qui d'abord furent placés sur les aîles du théâtre, où ils exécutoient différens airs avant la commencement de la pièce et entre les actes. Ensuite ils furent mis au fond des troisième loges, puis aux secondes, enfin entre le théâtre et le parterre, où ils sont restés."

Theatres differ little save in regard to their dimensions. The minor house is governed by the same laws, is conducted upon the same system, as the major one. It is as a humbler and cheaper edition, but it repeats down to minute particulars the example of its costly original. The orchestra, or some form of orchestra, is always indispensable. Even that street-corner tragedy which sets forth the story of Punch and Judy, could not be presented without its pandean-pipe accompaniment. The lowest vagrant theatre must, like the lady in the nursery ballad, have music wherever it goes. No doubt this is often of most inferior

quality, suggestive of a return to very early musical methods. But poverty constrains to primitiveness. Mr. Pepys, comparing the state of the stage under Killigrew to what it had been in earlier years, notes : " Now, wax candles and many of them ; then, not above three pounds of tallow ; now, all things civil : no rudeness anywhere ; then, as in a bear-garden ; then, two or three fiddlers ; now, nine or ten of the best," &c. The orchestra of a strolling theatre has been known to consist of one fiddler only, and he has been required to combine with his musical exertions the discharge of secretarial duties, enlivened by occasional appearances on the stage to strengthen casts, or help fill up the scene. The strollers' band is often of uncertain strength. For when the travelling company meets with misadventure, the orchestra are usually the first to prove unfaithful. They are the Swiss of the troop. The receipts fail, and the musicians desert. They carry their gifts elsewhere, and seek independent markets. The fairs, the racecourses, the country inns, attract the fiddler, and he strolls on his own account, when the payment of salaries is suspended. A veteran actor was wont to relate his experiences of fifty years ago as a member of the Stratford-upon-Avon company, when the orchestra consisted only of a fife and a tambourine, the instrumentalists performing, as they avowed, " not from notes but entirely by ear." Presently the company

removed to Warwick for the race week. But here the managerial difficulties increased—no band whatever could be obtained! This was the more distressing in that the performances were to be of an illegitimate character: a "famous tight-rope dancer" had been engaged. The dancer at once declared that his exhibition without music was not for a moment to be thought of. One of the company thereupon obligingly offered his services. He could play upon the violin: four tunes only. Now, provided an instrument could be borrowed for the occasion, and provided, moreover, the tight-rope artist could dance to the tune of "There's Nae Luck," or "Drink to Me Only," or "Away with Melancholy, or the "National Anthem," here was a way out of the dilemma, and all might yet be well. Unfortunately a violin was not forthcoming at any price, and the dancer declared himself quite unable to dance to the airs stated! How was faith to be kept with the public? At the last moment a barrel-organ was secured. The organist was a man of resources. In addition to turning the handle of his instrument, he contrived to play the triangles and the pan-pipes. Here, then, was a full band. The dancer still demurred. He must be assisted by a "clown to the rope," to chalk his soles, amuse the audience while he rested, and perform other useful duties. Another obliging actor volunteered his help. He would "by special desire and on this occa-

sion only," appear as clown. So having played Pangloss in the "Heir at Law," the first piece, he exchanged his doctorial costume for a suit of motley, and the performance "drew forth," as subsequent playbills stated, "universal and reiterated bursts of applause from a crowded and elegant audience." The experiment of the barrel-organ orchestra was not often repeated. The band of the Leamington Theatre was lent to the Warwick house, the distance between the establishments being only two miles. The Leamington audience were provided with music at the commencement of the evening only; the Warwick playgoers dispensed with orchestral accompaniments until a later period in the performances.

The absence of an orchestra, during the performances in London of the company of the Comédie Française in 1871, probably appeared strange and unaccountable to many of our untravelled playgoers. But the Comédie has long dispensed with all musical accompaniments. It presents the drama pure and simple. It prefers that the histrionic art should run alone, unaided by the musician. But this abstinence in the matter of music, while it is not of course a following of the method of the ancient classical stage, is not, further, one of the elder traditions of the Théâtre Français. For it is clear that the lighter comedies of Molière—such, for instance, as "*Le Malade Imaginaire*," or "*Le Bourgeois*

Gentilhomme"—could not have been presented originally without orchestral assistance. These works, indeed, avowedly pertain to the "comédie-ballet" class of entertainments, and are supplied with "intermèdes," in the course of which all kinds of curious dancing and singing occur. They are plays still preserving some characteristics of the grotesque humour and buffoonery of Italian pantomime. The "intermèdes," however, and their indispensable musical accompaniments, can be readily suppressed, without injury to the works from which they spring. They are a kind of fungous growth that rather saps the vitality of, than lends support to, the parent tree. The Comédie retains these plays in its repertory by discarding altogether their ballet or musical excrescences. We may note, that it was while playing in the last "intermède" of "*Le Malade Imaginaire*," that Molière was seized with the convulsive fit which proved fatal within an hour of the performance.

Did the London audiences of the Comédie long for the absent music? They did not seem to do so. They were at any rate resigned to the loss. They may even be said to have had the air of those who have met with what is called "a happy release;" for, after all, the departed was perhaps quite as much a foe as a friend. And this brings us to the consideration whether the alliance between music and the drama in England need be quite

so enduring and indissoluble as it is at present. Is the orchestra really necessary to the existence of all our theatres? Is it absolutely indispensable that every comedy should be preceded by a performance of the overture to "Fra Diavolo," let us say, or its acts divided by the execution—an appropriate word—of a set of quadrilles from "La Grande Duchesse," or the repetition of an endless and wearisome waltz? The orchestra escape from the play—may not the audience be permitted to avoid the orchestra? Of course, when dancing and singing form part of the entertainments of the evening, the band must be retained and endured. But their presence and performance, when the accompaniments to neither song nor dance are required of them, would seem to be superfluous. They are supposed to entertain the audience during the pauses in the representation. But if they fail to do this? In many cases they exist but as creatures of tradition, of superstition, of that inveterate conservatism which hinders all amendment in theatrical matters. And, no doubt, when an absurdity or an imposture pleads its antiquity or claims to be "a vested interest," the difficulty of suppressing it becomes prodigious.

Anyhow, our orchestras might surely mend their ways. They rejoice, at present, in the performance of the most hackneyed and inappropriate music. And they play, as a rule, execrably. Their usual repertory consists of

about six overtures, three sets of quadrilles, and four waltzes. It must sometimes happen that all the orchestras in London are at the same moment occupied in performing the same piece of music—the overture to “Zampa” or “Stradella” possibly. No connection is ever maintained between the nature of the play and the character of the music. “La Dame Blanche” does as well for “Othello” as for the “School for Scandal;” “Le Domino Noir” suits “Hamlet” equally with the “Lady of Lyons.” Offenbach intrudes upon Shakespeare, and Mozart introduces a sensation dramatist. And then the noise! No wonder that audiences carry away headaches from the theatres. Surely those must have been pleasanter and more peaceful times when violins and theorbos and harpsicals constituted the orchestra. With monster bands have come monstrous instruments for creating the greatest possible amount of uproar. The small orchestra imitates the large. So in theatres little bigger than drawing-rooms—which a pianoforte could probably fill sufficiently with sound—obstreperous drums are beaten and pantomimic trumpets blare, greatly to the torture of the audience. Some reform in this matter is urgently needed. For our own part we should regard with interest any experiment which had in view at once the greater comfort of the spectators, and the encouragement of the players to rely for support upon the simple exercise of their

own art. A theatre devoted to acting, and entrusting its actors with the best works obtainable, need not encumber itself with a useless orchestra. Let it be added, in conclusion, to obviate misconception, that no slur upon music or musicians is here for a moment contemplated. We only advocate a division of theatres into musical and non-musical, into dramatic and operatic, or partially operatic.

CHAPTER XII.

PROLOGUES.

"It is singular," Miss Mitford wrote to Mr. Fields, her American publisher, "that epilogues were just dismissed at the first representation of one of my plays—'Foscari,' and prologues at another—'Rienzi.'" "Foscari" was originally produced in 1826; "Rienzi" in 1828. According to Mr. Planché, however, the first play of importance presented without a prologue was his adaptation of Rowley's old comedy, "A Woman never Vext," produced at Covent Garden on November 9th, 1824, with a grand pageant of the Lord Mayor's Show as it appeared in the time of Henry VI. At one of the last rehearsals, Fawcett, the stage manager, inquired of the adapter if he had written a prologue? "No." "A five-act play and no prologue! Why, the audience will tear up the benches!" But they did nothing of the kind. They took not the slightest notice of the omission. After that,

little more was heard of the time-honoured custom which had ruled that prologues should, according to Garrick's description of them—

Precede the play in mournful verse,
As undertakers stalk before the hearse ;
Whose doleful march may strike the harden'd mind,
And wake its feelings for the dead behind.

People, indeed, began rather to wonder why they had ever required or been provided with a thing that was now found to be, in truth, so entirely unnecessary.

The prologues of our stage date from the earliest period of the British drama. They were not so much designed as were the prologues of the classical theatre to enlighten the spectators touching the subject of the forthcoming play ; but were rather intended to bespeak favour for the dramatist, and to deprecate adverse opinion. Originally, indeed, the prologue-speaker was either the author himself in person, or his representative. In his prologue to his farce of "The Deuce is in Him," George Colman, after a lively fashion, points out the distinction between the classical and the British forms of the prefatory address :

What does it mean ? What can it be ?
A little patience—and you'll see.
Behold, to keep your minds uncertain,
Between the scene and you this curtain !
So writers hide their plots no doubt,
To please the more when all comes out !
Of old the Prologue told the story,
And laid the whole affair before ye ;
Came forth in simple phrase to say :
"Fore the beginning of the play

I, hapless Polydore, was found
 By fishermen, or others, drowned !
 Or—I, a gentleman, did wed
 The lady I would never bed,
 Great Agamemnon's royal daughter,
 Who's coming hither to draw water."
 Thus gave at once the bards of Greece
 The cream and marrow of the piece;
 Asking no trouble of your own
 To skim the milk or crack the bone.
 The poets now take different ways,
 "E'en let them find it out for Bayes !"

The prologue-speaker of the Elizabethan stage entered after the trumpets had sounded thrice, attired in a long cloak of black cloth or velvet, occasionally assuming a wreath or garland of bays, emblematical of authorship. In the "Accounts of the Revels in 1573-74," a charge is made for "bays for the prologgs." Long after the cloak had been discarded it was still usual for the prologue-speaker to appear dressed in black. Robert Lloyd, in his "Familiar Epistle to George Colman," 1761, writes :

With decent sables on his back
 (Your 'prologuisers' all wear black)
 The prologue comes ; and, if it's mine
 It's very good and very fine.
 If not—I take a pinch of snuff,
 And wonder where you got such stuff.

Upon this subject, Mr. Payne Collier notes a stage direction in the Induction to Heywood's "Four 'Prentices of London," 1615 : "Enter three, in black cloaks, at the doors." Each of them advancing to speak the prologue, the first exclaims—"What mean you, my masters, to appear thus before your times ? Do you

not know that I am the prologue? Do you not see this long, black velvet cloak upon my back? Have you not sounded thrice?" So also, in the Induction to Ben Jonson's "Cynthia's Revels," two of the children of the chapel contend for the privilege of speaking the prologue, one of them maintaining his claim by pleading "possession of the cloak."

The custom of regarding the "prologuise" as the author or his representative, seems gradually to have been departed from, and prologues came to be delivered by one of the chief actors in the play, in the character he was about to undertake, or in some other assumed for the occasion. A certain solemnity of tone, however, was usually preserved in the prologue to tragedy—the goodwill and merciful consideration of the audience being still entreated for the author and his work, although considerable licence was permitted to the comedy prologue. And the prologues acquired more and more of a dramatic nature, being divided sometimes between two and three speakers, and less resembling formal prologues than those Inductions of which the early dramatists, and especially Ben Jonson, seem to have been so unreasonably fond. The Prologue to the "Poetaster" is spoken, in part, by Envy "rising in the midst of the stage," and, in part, by an official representative of the dramatist. So, the prologue to Shakespeare's

Second Part of "King Henry IV." is delivered by Rumour, "painted full of tongues;" a like office being accomplished by Gower and Chorus, in regard to the plays of "Pericles" and "King Henry V." It is to be noted that but few of Shakespeare's prologues and epilogues have been preserved. Malone conjectures that they were not held to be indispensable appendages to a play in Shakespeare's time. But Mr. Collier is probably more correct in assuming that they were often retrenched by the printer, because they could not be brought within the compass of a page, and because he was unwilling to add another leaf. In addition to those mentioned above, the prologues to "King Henry VIII.," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Romeo and Juliet," are extant, and have the peculiarity of informing the audience, after the old classical fashion, something as to the nature of the entertainment to be set before them. To the tragedy of "The Murder of Gonzago," contained in "Hamlet," Shakespeare, no doubt, recognising established usage, provided the prologue:

For us and for our tragedy
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.

Steele, writing in the *Guardian*, in 1713, expresses much concern for the death of Mr. Peer, of the Theatre Royal, "who was an actor at the Restoration, and took his theatrical degree with Betterton, Kynaston, and Harris."

Mr. Peer, it seems, especially distinguished himself in two characters, "which no man ever could touch but himself." One of these was the Apothecary in "*Caius Marius*," Otway's wretched adaptation of "*Romeo and Juliet*;" the other was the speaker of the prologue to the play in "*Hamlet*." It is plain that Mr. Peer's professional rank was not high; for these characters are not usually undertaken by performers of note. Steele admits that Peel's eminence lay in a narrow compass, and to that attributes "the enlargement of his sphere of action" by his employment as property-man in addition to his histrionic duties. Peer, however, is described as delivering the three lines of prologue "better than any man else in the world," and with "universal applause." He spoke "with such an air as represented that he was an actor, and with such an inferior manner as only acting an actor, as made the others on the stage appear real great persons and not representatives. This was a nicety in acting that none but the most subtle player could so much as conceive." It is conceivable, however, that something of this subtlety existed rather in the fancy of the critic than in the method of the player. This story of Mr. Peer is hardly to be equalled; yet Davies relates of Boheme, the actor, that when, upon his first appearance upon the stage, he played with some "itinerants" at Stratford-le-Bow, his feeling but simple

manner of delivering Francisco's short speech in "Hamlet"—

For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart—

at once roused the audience to a sense of his merits. "His salary was immediately increased by the manager; and he proved afterwards a great ornament of the stage."

The delivery of a prologue by an actress—that is to say, of course, by a boy in female dress, personating the character of a woman—appears to have been an unusual proceeding upon the Elizabethan stage. Mr. Collier has noted instances, however. In the case of the prologue to "Every Woman in her Humour," 1609, spoken by the heroine Flavia, "Enter Flavia as a Prologue," runs the stage direction; and she begins—"Gentles of both sexes and of all sorts, I am sent to bid ye welcome. I am but instead of a prologue, for a she prologue is as rare as a usurer's alms." And the prologue to Shirley's "Coronation," 1640, was also delivered by one of the representatives of female character. A passage is worth quoting, for its description of ordinary prologue-speaking at this time:

Since 'tis become the title of our play,
A woman once in a Coronation may
With pardon speak the prologue, give as free
A welcome to the theatre, as he
That with a little beard, a long black cloak,
With a starched face and supple leg hath spoke

Before the plays this twelvemonth. Let me then
Present a welcome to these gentlemen.
If you be kind and noble you will not
Think the worse of me for my petticoat.

It would seem that impatience was sometimes expressed at the poetic prologues and lengthy Inductions of the dramatists. The prologue to Beaumont and Fletcher's "Woman Hater," 1607, begins: "Gentlemen, Inductions are out of date, and a prologue in verse is as stale as a black velvet cloak and a bay garland; therefore you have it in plain prose, thus——." But the alteration did not please, apparently; at any rate, upon a subsequent production of the play, the authors furnished it with a prologue in verse of the old established pattern.

The Elizabethan dramatists often took occasion in their prologues to lecture the audience upon their conduct in the theatre, exhorting them to more seemly manners, and especially informing them that nothing of an indecorous nature would be presented upon the scene. The prologue to "The Woman Hater," above mentioned, pronounces "to the utter discomfort of all twopenny gallery men," that there is no impropriety contained in the play, and bids them depart, if they have been looking for anything of the kind. "Or if there be any lurking amongst you in corners," it proceeds, "with table books who have some hope to find fit matter to feed his malice on, let them clasp them up and slink away, or stay

and be converted." Of the play, it states, "some things in it you may meet with which are out of the common road : a duke there is, and the scene lies in Italy, as those two things lightly we never miss." The audience, however, are warned not to expect clap-traps, or personal satire. "You shall not find in it the ordinary and overworn way of jesting at lords and courtiers and citizens, without taxation of any particular or new vice by them found out, but at the persons of them ; such, he that made this, thinks vile, and for his own part vows that he never did think but that a lord, lord-born, might be a wise man, and a courtier an honest man." In the same way Shakespeare's prologue to "Henry VIII." welcomes those "that can pity," and "such as give their money out of hope, they may believe."

Those that come to see
Only a show or two, and so agree
The play may pass ; if they be still, and willing,
I'll undertake, may see away their shilling
Richly in two short hours.

But they are plainly told they will be deceived who have come to hear a merry graceless play—

A noise of targets, or to see a fellow
In a long motley coat guarded with yellow.

The prologue to Ben Jonson's "Staple of News" entreats the audience to abstain from

idle conversation, and to attend to his play, so that they may hear as well as see it.

He'd have you wise,
Much rather by your ears than by your eyes;
And prays you'll not prejudice his play for ill,
Because you mark it not and sit not still,
But have a longing to salute or talk.

* * *
Alas ! what is it to his scene to know
How many coaches in Hyde Park did show
Last spring ? what fun to-day at Medley's was ?
If Dunstan or the Phoenix best wine has ? &c. &c.

In the Induction the prologue is interrupted by the entrance of four gentlewomen, "lady-like attired," representative of Mirth, Tattle, Expectation, and Censure or Curiosity. The last named is charged with coming to the theatre "to see who wears the new suit to-day ; whose clothes are best formed, whatever the part be ; which actor has the best leg and foot ; what king plays without cuffs, and his queen without gloves ; who rides post in stockings and dances in boots." It is to be noted, too, that at this time the audience occupying the humbler places in the theatre are very harshly spoken of in the prologues. They are referred to as—

The vulgar sort
Of nutcrackers that only come for sport—

and as "grounds of your people that sit in the oblique caves and wedges of your house, your sinful sixpenny mechanicks," &c.

It is plain, however, that the rudeness of Ben Jonson's prologues had given offence, for,

indeed, he employed them not merely to lecture his audience, but also to lash and laugh to scorn rival playwrights. So to "The Magnetic Lady" no prologue was provided, but an Induction, in the course of which "a boy of the house" discourses with two gentlemen concerning the play, and explains that the author will "not be entreated to give it a prologue. He has lost too much that way already, he says. He will not woo the Gentile ignoramus so much. But careless of all vulgar censure, as not depending on common approbation, he is confident it shall super-please judicious, spectators, and to them he leaves it to work with the rest by example or otherwise." Further the boy gives valuable advice upon the subject of criticism, bidding the gentlemen take seats and "fly everything you see to the mark, and censure it freely, so you interrupt not the series or thread of the argument, to break or pucker it with unnecessary questions. For I must tell you that a good play is like a skein of silk, which if you take by the right end you may wind off at pleasure on the bottom or card of your discourse in a tale or so—how you will; but if you light on the wrong end you will pull all into a knot or elf-lock, which nothing but the shears or a candle will undo or separate."

After the Restoration prologues appear to have been held more than ever necessary to theatrical exhibitions. The writing of prologues even became a kind of special and pro-

fitable vocation. Dryden's customary fee for a prologue was five guineas, which contented him, until in 1682 he demanded of Southerne ten guineas for a prologue to "The Loyal Brothers," alleging that the players had hitherto had his goods too cheaply, and from that time forward ten guineas would be his charge. Dryden is to be accounted the most famous and successful of prologue writers, but it must be said that his productions of this class are deplorably disfigured by the profligacy of his time, and that all their brilliancy of wit does not compensate for their uncleanness. Dryden's prologues are also remarkable for their frequent recognition of the critics as a class apart from the ordinary audience; not critics as we understand them exactly, attached to journals and reviewing plays for the instruction of the public, but men of fashion affecting judicial airs, and expressing their opinions in clubs and coffee-houses, and authors charged with attending the theatres in the hope of witnessing the demolition of a rival bard. The prologue to "All for Love" opens with the lines—

What flocks of critics hover here to-day,
As vultures wait on armies for their prey,
All gaping for the carcase of a play!

And presently occurs the familiar passage—

Let those find fault whose wit's so very small,
They've had to show that they can think at all.
Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow;
He who would search for pearls must dive below.

Fops may have leave to level all they can,
As pigmies would be glad to lop a man.
Half wits are fleas, so little and so light,
We scarce could know they live, but that they bite.

Another prologue begins—

They who write ill, and they who ne'er durst write,
Turn critics out of mere revenge and spite;
A playhouse gives them fame; and up then starts
From a mean fifth-rate wit, a man of parts.

The more important critics are described
as—

A jury of the wits who still stay late,
And in their club decree the poor play's fate;
Their verdict back is to the boxes brought,
Thence all the town pronounces it their thought.

“The little Hectors of the pit” are also spoken of, and there is mention of “Fop-corner,” the prototype of “Fop’s-alley” of later years. Now, “a kind, hearty pit” is prayed for, and now, in a prologue delivered before the University of Oxford, stress is laid upon the advantages of “a learned pit.” It may be noted, too, that the prologues of Dryden, apart from their wit, and overlooking, if that can possibly be managed, their distressing grossness, are invaluable for the accurate and minute pictures they present of English life, manners, costumes, and character in the reign of Charles II.

In right of the many quotations it has supplied to literature and conversation, Dr. Johnson’s prologue spoken by Garrick upon the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, in 1747, may claim to be considered the most famous

production of its class. It is not, in truth, however, a prologue as prologues are ordinarily understood, but rather an address, written to suit special circumstances, and having no connection with any particular play. Boswell describes it as "unrivalled for just and manly criticism on the whole range of the English stage, as well as for poetic excellence," and records that it was during the season often called for by the audience. Johnson's prologue to his friend Goldsmith's comedy of "The Good-natured Man" was certainly open to the charge brought against it of undue solemnity. The first lines—

Press'd with the load of life the weary mind
Surveys the general toil of human kind—

when enunciated in the sepulchral tones of Bensley, the tragedian, were judged to have a depressing effect upon the audience—a conclusion which seems reasonable and probable enough, although Boswell suggested that "the dark ground might make Goldsmith's humour shine the more." Goldsmith himself was chiefly disturbed at the line describing him as "our little bard," which he thought likely to diminish his dignity, by calling attention to the lowness of his stature. "Little bard" was therefore altered to "anxious bard." Johnson also supplied a prologue to Kelly's posthumous comedy of "A Word to the Wise" (represented in 1770, for the benefit of the

author's widow and children), although he spoke contemptuously of the departed dramatist as "a dead staymaker," and confessed that he hated to give away literary performances, or even to sell them too cheaply. "The next generation," he said, "shall not accuse me of beating down the price of literature; one hates, besides, to give what one has been accustomed to sell. Would not you, now"—and here he turned to his brewer friend, Mr. Thrale—"rather give away money than porter?" To his own tragedy of "Irene," Johnson supplied a spirited prologue, which "awed" the house, as Boswell believed. In the concluding lines he deprecated all effort to win applause by other than legitimate means :

Be this at least his praise, be this his pride :
To force applause no modern arts are tried ;
Should partial catcalls all his hopes confound,
He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound ;
Should welcome sleep relieve the weary wit,
He rolls no thunders o'er the drowsy pit ;
No snares to captivate the judgment spreads,
Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads.
Unmoved, though wittings sneer and rivals rail,
Studious to please, yet not ashamed to fail,
He scorns the meek address, the suppliant strain ;
With merit needless, and without it vain.
In Reason, Nature, Truth he dares to trust :
Ye fops be silent, and ye wits be just !

Of prologues generally, Johnson pronounced that Dryden's were superior to any that David Garrick had written, but that Garrick had written more good prologues than Dryden. "It is wonderful that he has been able to

write such a variety of them." Garrick's prologues and epilogues are, indeed, quite innumerable, and are, almost invariably, sparkling, witty, and vivacious. They could scarcely fail to win the favour of an audience; and then, oftentimes they had the additional advantage of being delivered by himself.

Prologues seem to have been a recognised vehicle of literary courtesy. Authors favoured each other with these addresses as a kind of advertisement of the good understanding that prevailed between them—an evidence of respect, friendliness, and encouragement. Thus Addison's tragedy of "Cato" was provided with a prologue by Pope—the original line, "Britons, arise! be worth like this approved," being "liquidated" to "Britons, attend!"—the timid dramatist being alarmed lest he should be judged a promoter of insurrection. Johnson, as we have seen, now and then provided his friends with prologues. The prologue to Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" was written by Garrick, to be spoken by Woodward, the actor, "dressed in black, and holding a handkerchief to his eyes;" Colman wrote the prologue to "The School for Scandal;" and Sheridan supplied a prologue to Savage's tragedy of "Sir Thomas Overbury," on the occasion of its revival at Covent Garden, thirty-five years after the death of its author.

Prologues have now vanished, however, and are not likely to be reintroduced. It must be

added that they showed symptoms of decline in worth long before they departed. Originally apologies for players and dramatists—at a time when the histrionic profession was very lightly esteemed—they were retained by the conservatism of the stage as matters of form, long after they had forfeited all genuine excuse for their existence. The name is still retained, however, and applied to the introductory, or, to use Mr. Boucicault's word, "proloquial" acts of certain long and complicated plays, which seem to require for their due comprehension the exhibition to the audience of events antecedent to the real subject of the drama. But these "proloquial acts" are things quite apart from the old-fashioned prologue.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ART OF "MAKING-UP."

WHEN, to heighten the effect of their theatrical exhibitions, Thespis and his playfellows first daubed their faces with the lees of wine, they may be said to have initiated that art of "making-up" which has been of such important service to the stage. Paint is to the actor's face what costume is to his body—a means of decoration or disguise, as the case may require; an aid to his assuming this or that character, and concealing the while his own personal identity from the spectator. The mask of the classical theatre is only to be associated with a "make-up," in that it substituted a fictitious facial expression for the actor's own. Roscius is said to have always played in a vizard, on account of a disfiguring obliquity of vision with which he was afflicted. It was an especial tribute to his histrionic merits that the Romans, disregarding this defect, required him to relinquish his mask, that they might the better appreciate his

exquisite oratory and delight in the music of his voice. In much later years, however, "obliquity of vision" has been found to be no obstacle to success upon the stage. A dramatic critic, writing in 1825, noted it as a strange fact that "our three light comedians, Elliston, Jones, and Browne," each suffered from "what is called a cast in the eye."

To young and inexperienced players a make-up is precious, in that it has a fortifying effect upon their courage, and relieves them in some degree of consciousness of their own personality. They are the better enabled to forget themselves, seeing their identity can hardly be present to the minds of others. Garrick made his first histrionic essay as Aboan, in the play of "Oroonoko," "a part in which his features could not easily be discerned: under the disguise of a black countenance he hoped to escape being known, should it be his misfortune not to please." When Bottom the Weaver is allotted the part of Pyramus, intense anxiety touching his make-up is an early sentiment with him. "What beard were I best to play it in?" he inquires. "I will discharge it in either your straw-coloured beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow." Clearly the beard was an important part of the make-up at this time. Further on, Bottom counsels his brother clowns: "Get your apparel together, good strings to your

beards, new ribbons to your pumps;" and there are especial injunctions to the effect that Thisbe shall be provided with clean linen, that the lion shall pare his nails, and that there shall be abstinence from onions and garlic on the part of the company generally.

Old John Downes, who was prompter at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields from 1662 to 1706, and whose "*Roscius Anglicanus*" is a most valuable history of the stage of the Restoration, describes an actor named Johnson as being especially "skilful in the art of painting, which is a great adjunct very promotive to the art of elocution." Mr. Waldron, who, in 1789, produced a new edition of the "*Roscius Anglicanus*," with notes by Tom Davies, the biographer of Garrick, decides that Downes' mentions of the "art of painting" has reference to the art of "painting the face and marking it with dark lines to imitate the wrinkles of old age." This, Waldron continues, "was formerly carried to excess on the stage, though now a good deal disused. I have seen actors, who were really older than the characters they were to represent, mark their faces with black lines of Indian ink to such a degree that they appeared as if looking through a mask of wire." And Mr. Waldron finds occasion to add that "Mr. Garrick's skill in the necessary preparation of his face for the aged and venerable Lear, and for Lusignan, was as remarkable as his performance of those characters was admirable."

In 1741 was published "An Historical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe," a translation of a work by "the famous Lewis Riccoboni, of the Italian Theatre at Paris." The author had visited England in 1727, apparently, when he had conversed with the great Mr. Congreve, finding in him "taste joined with great learning," and studied with some particularity the condition of the English stage. "As to the actors," he writes, "if, after forty-five years' experience I may be entitled to give my opinion, I dare advance that the best actors in Italy and France come far short of those in England." And he devotes some space to a description of a performance he witnessed at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, dwelling especially upon the skill of an actor who personated an old man. "He who acted the old man executed it to the nicest perfection which one could expect in no player who had not forty years' experience. . . I made no manner of doubt of his being an old comedian, who, instructed by long experience, and, at the same time, assisted by the weight of years, had performed it so naturally. But how great was my surprise when I learned that he was a young man of about twenty-six! I could not believe it; but I owned that it might be possible had he only used a trembling and broken voice and had only an extreme weakness possessed his body, because I conceived it possible for a young actor, by the

help of art, to imitate that debility of nature to such a pitch of exactness ; but the wrinkles of his face, his sunken eyes, and his loose and yellow cheeks, the most certain marks of a great old age, were incontestable proofs against what they said to me. Notwithstanding all this I was forced to submit to truth, because I know for certain that the actor, to fit himself for the part of the old man, spent an hour in dressing himself, and that, with the assistance of several pencils, he disguised his face so nicely and painted so artificially a part of his eyebrows and eyelids, that, at the distance of six paces, it was impossible not to be deceived. I was desirous to be a witness of this myself, but pride hindered me ; so, knowing I must be ashamed, I was satisfied with a confirmation of it from other actors. Mademoiselle Salle, among others, who then shone upon that stage, confessed to me that the first time she saw him perform she durst not go into a passage where he was, fearing lest she should throw him down should she happen to touch him in passing by." Assuredly a more successful make-up than this could not be desired. In conclusion, Signor Riccoboni flatters himself that his reference to this matter may not be thought altogether useless ; "it may let us know to what an exactness the English comedians carry the imitation of nature, and may serve for a proof of all that I have advanced of the actors of the English theatre."

Dogget, the old comedian of Queen Anne's time—to whom we owe an annual boat race upon the Thames for a "coat and badge," and, inferentially, the popular burletta of "The Waterman"—was remarkably skilful, according to Colley Cibber, "in dressing a character to the greatest exactness . . . the least article of whatever habit he wore seemed to speak and mark the different humour he represented: a necessary care in a comedian, in which many have been too remiss or ignorant." This is confirmed by another critic, who states that Dogget "could with the greatest exactness paint his face so as to represent the ages of seventy, eighty, and ninety, distinctly, which occasioned Sir Godfrey Kneller to tell him one day at Button's Coffee House, that 'he excelled him in painting, for that he could only paint from the originals before him, but that he (Dogget) could vary them at pleasure, and yet keep a close likeness.'" In the character of Moneytrap, the miser, in Vanbrugh's comedy of "The Confederacy," Dogget is described as wearing "an old threadbare black coat, to which he had put new cuffs, pocket-lids and buttons, on purpose to make its rustiness more conspicuous. The neck was stuffed so as to make him appear round-shouldered, and give his head the greater prominency; his square-toed shoes were large enough to buckle over those he wore in common, which made his legs appear much smaller than usual." Altogether,

Mr. Dogget's make-up appears to have been of a very thorough and artistic kind.

Garrick's skill "in preparing his face" has been already referred to, upon the authority of Mr. Waldron. From the numerous pictures of the great actor, and the accounts of his histrionic method furnished by his contemporaries, it would seem, however, as though he relied less upon the application of paint than upon his extraordinary command of facial expression. At a moment's notice he completely varied his aspect, "conveying into his face every possible kind of passion, blending one into another, and as it were shadowing them with an infinite number of gradations. . . . In short," says Dibdin, "his face was what he obliged you to fancy it: age, youth, plenty, poverty, everything it assumed." Certainly an engraved portrait of Garrick as Lear, published in 1761, does not suggest his deriving much help from the arts of making-up or of costume. He wears a short robe of velvet, trimmed with ermine, his white wig is disordered and his shirt front is much crumpled; but otherwise his white silk hose, lace ruffles, high-heeled shoes and diamond buckles, are more appropriate to Sir Peter Teazle than to King Lear. And as much may be said of his closely-shaven face, the smooth surface of which is not disturbed by the least vestige of a beard. Yet the King Lear of later times have been

all beard, or very nearly so. With regard to Garrick's appearance in the part of Lusignan, Davies relates how, two days before his death, the suffering actor, very wan and sallow of countenance, slow and solemn of movement, was seen to wear a rich night-gown, like that which he always wore in Lusignan, the venerable old king of Jerusalem; he presented himself to the imagination of his friend as if he was just ready to act that character.

Charles Mathews, the elder, no doubt possessed much of Garrick's power of changing at will his facial aspect. At the theatre of course he resorted to the usual methods of making-up for the part he played; but the sudden transformations of which his "At Homes" largely consisted were accomplished too rapidly to be much assisted by pencilling the face, as were indeed the feats he sometimes accomplished in private circles, for the entertainment of his friends. In the biography of her husband, Mrs. Mathews relates how his advice was once sought by Godwin the novelist, just before the publication of his story of "Cloudesly," on a matter—the art of making-up—the actor was held to have made peculiarly his own. Godwin wrote to him: "My dear Sir,—I am at this moment engaged in writing a work of fiction, a part of the incidents of which will consist in escapes in disguises. It has forcibly struck me that if I could be indulged in the pleasure of half-an-hour's conversation with you on the

subject, it would furnish me with some hints, which, beaten on the anvil of my brain, would be of eminent service to me on the occasion," &c. A meeting was appointed, and at an early date the author dined at the actor's cottage. Godwin, anxious not to outrage probability in his story, sought information as to "the power of destroying personal identity." Mathews assumed several disguises, and fully satisfied his visitor upon the point in question. "Soon after," writes Mrs. Mathews, "a gentleman, an eccentric neighbour of ours, broke in upon us as Mr. Godwin was expressing his wonder at the variety of expression, character, and voice of which Mr. Mathews was capable. We were embarrassed, and Mr. Godwin evidently vexed at the intruder. However, there was no help for it; the servant had admitted him, and he was introduced in form to Mr. Godwin. The moment Mr. Jenkins (for such was his name) discovered the distinguished person he had so luckily for him dropped in upon, he was enthusiastically pleased at the event, talked to Mr. Godwin about all his works, inquired about the forthcoming book—in fact, bored him through and through. At last the author turned to my husband for refuge against this assault of admiration, and discovered that his host had left the room. He therefore rose from his seat and approached the window leading to the lawn, Mr. Jenkins officiously following, and insisting upon opening it for

him ; and while he was urging a provokingly obstinate lock, the object of his devoted attention waited behind him for release. The casement at length flew open, and Mr. Godwin passing the gentleman with a courteous look of thanks, found to his astonishment that Mr. Jenkins had disappeared, and that Mr. Mathews stood in his place !” Students of “Cloudesly” may discover therein the result of Godwin’s interview with Mathews, and their discussion concerning the art of making-up and disguise.

Some fifty years ago Mr. Leman Thomas Rede published “The Road to the Stage, a Player’s Vade-Mecum,” setting forth, among other matters, various details of the dressing-rooms behind the curtain. Complaint was made at the time that the work destroyed “the romance of the profession,” and laid bare mysteries of the actor’s life, such as the world in general had small concern with. But Mr. Rede’s revelations do not tell very much ; at any rate, the secrets he deals with have come to be things of common knowledge. Nor are his instructions upon the art of making-up to be accounted highly in these times. . . “Light comedy calves,” he tells us, “are made of ragged silken hose ;” and what may be called “Othello’s blacking,” is to be composed of “burnt cork, pulverised and mixed with porter.” Legs coming before the foot-lights must of course be improved by

mechanical means, when nature has been unkind, or time has destroyed symmetry; but art has probably discovered a better method of concealing deficiencies than consists in the employment of "ragged silken hose." The veteran light comedian, Lewis, who at very advanced age appeared in juvenile characters, to the complete satisfaction of his audience, was famed for his skill in costume and making-up. But one night, a roguish actress, while posted near him in the side wings, employed herself in converting one of his calves into a pincushion. As soon as he discovered the trick, he affected to feel great pain, and drew up his leg as though in an agony; but he had remained too long unconscious of the proceeding to persuade lookers-on of the genuineness of his limb's symmetry. With regard to Othello's complexion, there is what the *Cookery Books* call "another way." Chetwood, in his "*History of the Stage*," 1749, writes: "The composition for blackening the face are (*sic*) ivory-black and pomatum; which is with some pains cleaned with fresh butter." The information is given in reference to a performance of Othello by the great actor Barton Booth. It was hot weather, and his complexion in the later scenes of the play had been so disturbed, that he had assumed "the appearance of a chimney-sweeper." The audience, however, were so impressed by the art of his acting, that they disregarded this

mischance, or applauded him the more on account of it. On the repetition of the play he wore a crape mask, "with an opening proper for the mouth, and shaped in form for the nose." But in the first scene one part of the mask slipped so that he looked "like a magpie." Thereupon he was compelled to resort again to lamp-black. The early Othellos, it may be noted, were of a jet-black hue, such as we now find on the faces of Christy Minstrels; the Moors of later times have been content to paint themselves a dark olive or light mahogany colour. But a liability to soil all they touch has always been the misfortune of Othellos. There was great laughter in the theatre one night when Stephen Kemble, playing Othello for the first time with Miss Satchell as Desdemona, kissed her before smothering her, and left an ugly patch of soot upon her cheek. However, as Miss Satchell subsequently became Mrs. Stephen Kemble, it was held that sufficient amends had been made to her for the soiling she had undergone.

Another misadventure, in regard to the complexion of Shakespeare's Moor, has been related of an esteemed actor, now and for many years past attached to the Haymarket Theatre. While but a tyro in his profession, he had undertaken to appear as Othello, for one night only, at the Gravesend Theatre. But, not being acquainted with the accustomed method of blackening his skin, and

being too nervous and timid to make inquiry on the subject, he applied to his face a burnt cork, simply. At the conclusion of the performance, on seeking to resume his natural hue, by the ordinary process of washing in soap and water, he found, to his great dismay, that the skin of his face was peeling off rather than the colour disappearing! The cork had been too hot by a great deal, and had injured his cuticle considerably. With the utmost haste, although announced to play Hamlet on the following evening, the actor—who then styled himself Mr. Hulsingham, a name he forthwith abandoned—hired a post-chaise and eloped from Gravesend.

Making-up is in requisition when the performer desires to look either younger or older than he or she really is. It is, of course, with the first-named portion of the art that actresses are chiefly concerned, although the beautiful Mrs. Woffington, accepting the character of Veturia in Thomson's "Coriolanus," did not hesitate to assume the aspect of age, and to paint lines and wrinkles upon her fair face. But she was a great artist, and her loveliness was a thing so beyond all question that she could afford to disguise it or to seem to slight it for a few nights; possibly it shone the brighter afterwards for its brief eclipse. Otherwise, making-up pertains to an actor's "line of business," and is not separable from it. Once young or once old he so remains, as a rule,

until the close of his professional career. There is indeed a story told of a veteran actor who still flourished in juvenile characters, while his son, as a matter of choice or of necessity, invariably impersonated the old gentlemen of the stage. But when the two players met in a representation of "The Rivals," and Sir Anthony the son, had to address Captain Absolute, the father, in the words of the dramatist, "I'll disown you ; I'll unget you ; I'll never call you Jack again !" the humour of the situation appealed too strongly to the audience, and more laughter than Sheridan had ever contemplated was stirred by the scene.

The veterans who have been accused of superfluously lagging upon the stage, find an excuse for their presence in the skill of their make-up. For the age of the players is not to be counted by the almanack, but appraised in accordance with their looks. On the stage to seem young is to be young, though occasionally it must happen that actors and audience are not quite in agreement upon this question of aspect. There have been many youthful dramatic heroines very well stricken in years ; ingénues of advanced age, and columbines who might almost be crones ; to say nothing of "young dogs" of light comedians, who in private life are well qualified to appear as grandsires, or even as great-grandfathers. But ingenuity in painting the face and padding the figure will probably long secure toleration

for patriarchal Romeos, and even for matriarchal Juliets.

Recent discoveries have no doubt benefited the toilets of the players, which, indeed, stood in need of assistance, the fierce illumination of the modern stage being considered. In those palmy but dark days of the drama, when gas and lime-lights were not, the disguising of the mischief wrought by time must have been a comparatively easy task.

However, supply, as usual, has followed demand, and there are now traders dealing specially in the materials for making-up, in theatrical cosmetics of the best possible kind at the lowest possible prices: "Superfine rouge, rose for lips, blanc (liquid and in powder), pencils for eyebrows, crème de l'impératrice and fleur-de-riz for softening the skin," &c. Further, there are the hairdressers, who provide theatrical wigs of all kinds, and advertise the merits of their "old men's bald pates," which must seem a strange article of sale to those unversed in the mysteries of stage dressing-rooms. One inventive person, it may be noted, loudly proclaims the merits of a certain "spirit gum" he has concocted, using which, as he alleges, "no actor need fear swallowing his moustache"—so runs the form of his advertisement.

Of Mademoiselle Guimard, the famous French opera-dancer, it is related that her portrait, painted in early youth, always rested

upon her dressing-table. Every morning, during many years, she carefully made up her face to bring her looks in as close accord as possible with the loveliness of her picture. For an incredible time her success is reported to have been something marvellous. But at last the conviction was forced upon her that her facial glories had departed. Yet her figure was still perfectly symmetrical, her grace and agility were as supreme as they had ever been. She was sixty-four, when, yielding to the urgent entreaties of her friends, she consented to give a "very last" exhibition of her art. The performance was of a most special kind. The curtain was so far lowered as to conceal completely the head and shoulders of the dancer. "*Il fût impossible aux spectateurs,*" writes a biographer of the lady, "*de voir autre que le travail de ses jambes dont le temps avait respecté l'agilité et les formes pures et délicates !*"

By way of final word on the subject, it may be stated that making-up is but a small portion of the histrionic art; and not, as some would have it, the very be-all and end-all of acting. It is impossible not to admire the ingenuity of modern face-painting upon the stage, and the skill with which, in some cases, well-known personages have been represented by actors of, in truth, totally different physical aspect; but still there seems a likelihood of efforts of this kind being urged beyond

reasonable bounds. So, too, there appears to be an excessive use of cosmetics and colouring by youthful performers, who really need little aid of this kind, beyond that application of the hare's-foot which can never be altogether dispensed with. Moreover, it has become necessary for players, who have resolved that their faces shall be pictures, to decide from what part of the theatre such works of art are to be viewed. At present many of these over-painted countenances may "fall into shape," as artists say, when seen from the back benches of the gallery, for instance ; but judged from a nearer standpoint they are really but pictorial efforts of a crude, uncomfortable, and mistaken kind.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAINT AND CANVAS.

VASARI, the historian of painters, has much to say in praise of the "perspective views" or scenes executed by Baldassare Peruzzi, an artist and architect of great fame in his day, who was born in 1480 at Florence, or Volterra, or Siena, it is not known which, each of these noble cities of Tuscany having claimed to be his birthplace. When the Roman people held high festival in honour of Giuliano de' Medici, they obtained various works of art from Baldassare, including a scene painted for a theatre, so admirably ingenious and beautiful, that very great amazement is said to have been awakened in every beholder. At a later period, when the "Calandra," written by the Cardinal di Bibiena—"one of the first comedies seen or recited in the vulgar tongue"—was performed before Pope Leo, the aid of Baldassare was sought again, to prepare the scenic adornments of the representation. His labours were suc-

cessful beyond measure ; two of his scenes, painted upon this or upon some other occasion, Vasari pronounced to be "surprisingly beautiful, opening the way to those of a similar kind which have been made in our own day." The artist was a fine colourist, well skilled in perspective, and in the management of light, insomuch that his drawings did not look "like things feigned, but rather as the living reality." Vasari relates that he conducted Titian to see certain works of Peruzzi, of which the illusion was most complete. The greater artist "could by no means be persuaded that they were simply painted, and remained in astonishment, when, on changing his point of view, he perceived that they were so." Dying in 1536, Baldassare was buried in the Rotondo, near the tomb of Raffaello da Urbino, all the painters, sculptors, and architects of Rome attending the interment. That he was an artist of the first rank was agreed on all hands. And he is further entitled to be remembered as one of the very earliest of great scene-painters.

In England, some six-and-thirty years later, there was born an artist and architect of even greater fame than Peruzzi : Inigo Jones, who, like Peruzzi, rendered important aid to the adornment of the stage. In his youth Inigo had studied landscape-painting in Italy. At Rome he became an architect ; as Walpole expresses it, "he dropped the pencil and conceived Whitehall."

Meanwhile a taste, even a sort of passion, had arisen at the English court for masques and pageants of extraordinary magnificence. Poetry, painting, music, and architecture were combined in their production. Ben Jonson was the laureate; Inigo Jones the inventor and designer of the scenic decorations; Lanieri, Lawes, and Ferabosco contributed the musical embellishments; the king, the queen, and the young nobility danced in the interludes. On these entertainments £3,000 to £5,000 were often expended, and on more public occasions, £10,000 and even £20,000. "It seems," says Isaac Disraeli, "that as no masque writer equalled Jonson, so no 'machinist' rivalled Inigo Jones." For the great architect was wont to busy himself in devising mechanical changes of scenery, such as distinguishes modern pantomime. Jonson, describing his "Masque of Blackness," performed before the court at Whitehall, on Twelfth Night, 1605, says, "For the scene was drawn a landscape, consisting of small woods, and here and there a void place, filled with hangings; which falling, an artificial sea was seen to shoot forth, as if it flowed to the land, raised with waves, which seemed to move, and in some places the billows to break, as imitating that orderly disorder which is common in nature." Then follows a long account of the appearance, attire, and "sprightly movements of the masquers:" Oceanus, Oceaniæ, Niger and his daughters, with Tritons,

mermaids, mermen, and sea-horses, "as big as the life." "These thus presented," he continues, "the scene behind seemed a vast sea, and united with this that flowed forth, from the termination or horizon of which (being the head of the stage, which was placed in the upper end of the hall) was drawn by the lines of perspective, the whole work shooting downwards from the eye, which decorum made it more conspicuous, and caught the eye afar off with a wondering beauty, to which was added an obscure and cloudy night piece, that made the whole set off. So much for the bodily part, which was of Master Inigo Jones's design and art." Indeed, Inigo was not simply the scene-painter; he also devised the costumes, and contrived the necessary machinery. In regard to many of these entertainments, he was responsible for "the invention, ornaments, scenes, and apparitions, with their descriptions;" for everything, in fact, but the music and the words to be spoken or sung.

These masques and court pageants gradually brought movable scenery upon the stage, in place of the tapestries, "arras cloths," "traverses," or curtains drawn upon rods, which had previously furnished the theatre. Still the masques were to be distinguished from the ordinary entertainments of the public play-houses. The court performances knew little of regular plot or story; ordinarily avoided all reference to nature and real life; and were

remarkable for the luxurious fancifulness and costly eccentricity they displayed. They were provided by the best writers of the time, and in many cases were rich in poetic merit. Still they were expressly designed to afford valuable opportunities to the musical composer, to the ballet-dancers, mummers, posture-makers, and costumiers. The regular drama, such as the Elizabethan public supported, could boast few attractions of this kind. It was altogether without movable scenery, although possessed of a balcony or upper stage, used to represent, now the walls of a city, as in "King John," now the top of a tower, as in "Henry VI." or "Antony and Cleopatra," and now the window to an upper chamber. Mr. Payne Collier notes that in one of the oldest historical plays extant, "Selimus, Emperor of the Turks," published in 1594, there is a remarkable stage direction demonstrating the complete absence of scenery, by the appeal made to the simple good faith of the audience. The hero is represented conveying the body of his father in a solemn funeral procession to the Temple of Mahomet. The stage direction runs: "Suppose the Temple of Mahomet"—a needless injunction, as Mr. Collier remarks, if there had existed the means of exhibiting the edifice in question to the eyes of the spectators. But the demands upon the audience to abet the work of theatrical illusion, and with their thoughts to piece out the imperfections of the dramatists, are frequently to

be met with in the old plays. Of the poverty of the early stage, in the matter of scenic decorations, there is abundant evidence. Fleckno, in his "Short Discourse of the Stage," 1664, by which time movable scenery had been introduced, writes: "Now for the difference between our theatres and those of former times; they were but plain and simple, with no other scenes nor decorations of the stages but only old tapestry, and the stage strewed with rushes."

The simple expedient of writing up the names of the different places, where the scene was laid in the progress of a play, or affixing a placard to that effect upon the tapestry at the back of the stage, sufficed to convey to the spectators the intentions of the author. "What child is there," asks Sir Philip Sidney, "that, coming to a play and seeing Thebes written in great letters on an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes?" Oftentimes, too, opportunity was found in the play itself, or in its prologue, to inform the audience of the place in which the action of the story is supposed to be laid. "Our scene is Rhodes," says old Hieronymo in Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy," 1588. And the title of the play was also exhibited in the same way, so that the audience did not lack instruction as to the purport of the entertainment set before them.

The introduction of movable scenes upon the stage has been usually attributed to Sir

William Davenant, who, in 1658, evading the ordinance of 1647, by which the theatres were peremptorily closed, produced, at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, an entertainment rather than a play, entitled "The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru, expressed by vocal and instrumental music, and by art of perspective in scenes : " an exhibition which Cromwell is generally supposed to have permitted, more from his hatred of the Spaniards than by reason of his tolerance of dramatic performances. The author of "*Historia Histrionica*," a tract written in 1699, also expressly states that "after the Restoration, the king's players acted publicly at the Red Bull for some time, and then removed to a new-built playhouse in Vere Street, by Clare Market; there they continued for a year or two, and then removed to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, where they first made use of scenes, which had been a little before introduced upon the public stage by Sir William Davenant." It is to be observed, however, that inasmuch as the masques, such as the court of Charles I. had so favoured, were sometimes produced at the public theatres, and could hardly have been presented there, shorn of the mechanical appliances and changes which constituted a main portion of their attractiveness, movable scenery, or stage artifices that might fairly be so described, could not be entirely new to a large portion of the public. Thus the masque of "*Love's Mistress*,

or the Queen's Masque," by Thomas Heywood, 1640, was "three times presented before their Majesties at the Phoenix in Drury Lane;" Heywood expressly acknowledging his obligation to Inigo Jones, who "changed the stage to every act, and almost to every scene."

It must not be supposed, however, that the introduction of scenery was hailed unanimously as a vast improvement upon the former condition of the stage. There was no doubt abundance of applause: a sufficient number of spectators were well pleased to find that now their eyes were to be addressed not less than their ears and their minds, and were satisfied that exhibitions of the theatre would be presently much more intelligible to them than had hitherto been the case. Still the sages shook their heads, distrusting the change, and prophesying evil of it. Even Mr. Payne Collier has been moved by his conservative regard for the Elizabethan stage and the early drama to date from the introduction of scenery the beginning of the decline of our dramatic poetry. He holds it a fortunate circumstance for the poetry of our old plays, that "painted movable scenery" had not then been introduced. "The imagination only of the auditor was appealed to, and we owe to the absence of painted canvas many of the finest descriptive passages in Shakespeare, his contemporaries, and immediate followers." Further, he states his opinion that our old dramatists "luxuriated in passages

descriptive of natural or artificial scenery, because they knew their auditors would have nothing before their eyes to contradict the poetry ; the hangings of the stage made little pretensions to anything but coverings for the walls, and the notion of the place represented was taken from what was said by the poet, and not from what was attempted by the painter."

It need hardly be stated that the absence of scenes and scene-shifting had by no means confined the British drama to a classical form, although regard for "unity of place," at any rate, might seem to be almost logically involved in the immovable condition of the stage fittings. Some two or three plays, affecting to follow the construction adopted by the Greek and Roman stage, are certainly to be found in the Elizabethan repertory, but they had been little favoured by the playgoers of the time, and may fairly be viewed as exceptions proving the rule that our drama is essentially romantic. Indeed, our old dramatists were induced by the absence of scenery to rely more and more upon the imagination of their audience. As Mr. Collier observes : "If the old poets had been obliged to confine themselves merely to the changes that could at that early date have been exhibited by the removal of painted canvas or boarding, we should have lost much of that boundless diversity of situation and character allowed by this happy absence of restraint." At the same

time, the liberty these writers permitted themselves did not escape criticism from the devout adherents of the classical theatre. Sir Philip Sidney, in his "Apology for Poetry," 1595, is severe upon the "defectious" nature of the English drama, especially as to its disregard of the unities of time and place. Now, he says, three ladies "walke to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden; by-and-by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock; upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave; while in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then, what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?" Dryden, it may be noted, in his "Essay of Dramatic Poesie" has a kindred passage as to the matters to be acted on the stage, and the things "supposed to be done behind the scenes."

Of the scenery of his time, Mr. Pepys makes frequent mention, without, however, entering much into particulars on the subject. In August, 1661, he notes the reproduction of Davenant's comedy of "The Wits," "never acted yet with scenes;" adding, "and indeed, it is a most excellent play and admirable scenes." A little later he records a performance of "'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,' done with

scenes very well, but, above all, Betterton did the prince's part beyond imagination." It is satisfactory to find that in this case, at any rate, the actor held his ground against the scene-painter. Under another date, he refers to a representation of "The Faithful Shepherdess" of Fletcher, "a most simple thing, and yet much thronged after and often shown; but it is only for the scene's sake, which is very fine." A few years later he describes a visit "to the King's Playhouse all in dirt, they being altering of the stage, to make it wider. But my business," he proceeds, "was to see the inside of the stage, and all the 'tiring-rooms and machines; and, indeed, it was a sight worth seeing. But to see their clothes, and the various sorts, and what a mixture of things there was—here a wooden leg; there a ruff, here a hobby-horse, there a crown, would make a man split himself to see with laughing; and particularly Lacy's wardrobe and Shotrell's. But, then, again, to think how fine they show on the stage by candlelight, and how poor things they are to look at too near at hand, is not pleasant at all. The machines are fine, and," he concludes, "the paintings very pretty." In October, 1667, he records that he sat in the boxes for the first time in his life, and discovered that from that point of view "the scenes do appear very fine indeed, and much better than in the pit."

The names of the artists whose works won

Mr. Pepys's applause have not come down to us. Of Robert Streeter, sergeant-painter to King Charles II.; there is frequent mention made in the "Diary" of Evelyn, who highly lauds the artist's "very glorious scenes and perspectives," which adorned Dryden's play of the "Conquest of Granada," on its representation at Whitehall. Evelyn, not caring much for such entertainments, seems, nevertheless, to have frequently attended the plays and masques of the Court. In February, 1664, he saw acted "The Indian Queen" of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden—"a tragedy well written, so beautiful with rich scenes as the like had never been seen here, or haply (except rarely) elsewhere on a mercenary theatre." At a later date, one Robert Aggas, a painter of some fame, is known to have executed scenes for the theatre in Dorset Garden. Among other scene-painters of distinction, pertaining to a comparatively early period of the art, may be noted Nicholas Thomas Dall, a Danish landscape-painter, who established himself in London in 1760, was long occupied as scene-painter at Covent Garden Theatre, and became an associate of the Royal Academy in 1771; Hogarth, who is reported to have painted a camp scene for the private theatre of Dr. Hoadley, Dean of Winchester; John Richards, a member of the Royal Academy, who, during many years, painted scenes for Covent Garden; Michael Angelo Rooker, pupil

of Paul Sandby, and one of the first Associates of the Academy, who was scene-painter at the Haymarket; Novosielsky, the architect of the Opera House, Haymarket, who also supplied that establishment with many notable scenes, and, to pass over many minor names, De Louthembourg, Garrick's scene-painter, and one of the most renowned artists of his period.

It will be remembered that Mr. Puff, in the "Critic," giving a specimen of "the puff direct" in regard to a new play, says: "As to the scenery, the miraculous powers of Mr. De Louthembourg are universally acknowledged. In short, we are at a loss which to admire most, the unrivalled genius of the author, the great attention and liberality of the managers, the wonderful abilities of the painter, or the incredible exertions of all the performers." Shortly after his arrival in England, about 1770, De Louthembourg became a contributor to the exhibition of the Royal Academy. In 1780 he was elected an Associate; in the following year he obtained the full honours of academicianship. His easel-pictures were for the most part landscapes, effective and forcible after an unconventional fashion, and wholly at variance with the "classically-composed" landscapes then in vogue. Turner, when, in 1808, he was appointed Professor of Perspective to the Royal Academy, is said to have taken up his abode at Hammersmith, in order that he might be near De Louthembourg, for whose

works he professed cordial admiration. The old scene-painter's bold and strong effects, his daring treatment of light and shade, his system of colour, bright even to gaudiness, probably arrested the attention of the younger artist, and were to him exciting influences. Upon De Louthembourg's landscapes, however, little store is now placed ; but as a scene-painter he deserves to be remembered for the ingenious reforms he introduced. He found the scene a mere "flat" of strained canvas extending over the whole stage. He was the first to use "set scenes" and "raking pieces." He also invented transparent scenes with representations of moonlight, sunshine, firelight, volcanoes, &c., and obtained new effects of colour by means of silken screens of various hues placed before the foot and side lights. He discovered, too, that ingenious effects might be obtained by suspending gauzes between the scene and the spectators. These are now, of course, but commonplace contrivances ; they were, however, distinctly the inventions of De Louthembourg, and were calculated to impress the playgoers of his time very signally. To Garrick De Louthembourg rendered very important assistance, for Garrick was much inclined for scenic decorations of a showy character, although as a rule he restricted these embellishments to the afterpieces, and for the more legitimate entertainments of his stage was content to employ old and stock scenery

that had been of service in innumerable plays. Tate Wilkinson, writing in 1790, refers to a scene then in use which he remembered so far back as the year 1747. "It has wings and flat of Spanish figures at full length, and two folding-doors in the middle. I never see those wings slide on, but I feel as if seeing my old acquaintance unexpectedly."

Of later scene-painters, such as Roberts and Stanfield, Grieve and Telbin, and to come down to the present time, Beverley and Calcott, Hawes Craven and O'Connor, there seems little occasion to speak; the achievements of these artists are matters of almost universal knowledge. It is sufficient to say that in their hands the art they practise has been greatly advanced, even to the eclipse of the efforts of both actors and dramatists.

Some few notes, however, may be worth telling in relation to the technical methods adopted by the scene-painter. In the first place, he relies upon the help of the carpenter to stretch a canvas tightly over a frame, or to nail a wing into shape; and subsequently it is the carpenter's duty, with a small sharp saw, to cut the edge of irregular wings, such as representations of foliage or rocks, an operation known behind the curtain as "marking the profile." The painter's studio is usually high up above the rear of the stage—a spacious room, well lighted by means of skylights or a lantern in the roof. The canvas, which is of

course of vast dimensions, can be raised to the ceiling, or lowered through the floor, to suit the convenience of the artist, by means of machinery of ingenious construction. The painter has invariably made a preliminary water-colour sketch of his scene, on paper or cardboard. Oftentimes, with the help of a miniature stage, such as school-boys delight in, he is enabled to form a fair estimate of the effect that may be expected from his design. The expansive canvas has been sized over, and an outline of the picture to be painted—a landscape, or an interior, as the case may be—has been boldly marked out by the artist. Then the assistants and pupils ply their brushes, and wash in the broad masses of colour, floods of light, and clouds of darkness. The dimensions of the canvas permit of many hands being employed upon it, and the work proceeds therefore with great rapidity. But the scene-painter is constant in his supervision of his subordinates, and when their labours are terminated, he completes the design with numberless improving touches and masterly strokes. Of necessity, much of the work is of a mechanical kind; scroll-work, patterned walls, or cornices are accomplished by “stenciling” or “pouncing”—that is to say, the design is pricked upon a paper, which, being pressed upon the canvas, and smeared or dabbed with charcoal, leaves a faint trace of the desired outline. The straight lines in an

architectural scene are traced by means of a cord, which is rubbed with colour in powder, and, having been drawn tight, is allowed to strike smartly against the canvas, and deposit a distinct mark upon its surface. Duty of this kind is readily accomplished by a boy, or a labourer of little skill. Scenes of a pantomime order, in which glitter is required, are dabbed here and there by the artist with thin glue; upon these moist places, Dutch metal—gold or silver leaf—is then fixed, with a result that large audiences have never failed to find resplendent and delightful. These are some, but, of course, a few only, of the methods and mysteries of the scene-painter's art.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TIRING-ROOM.

THE information that has come down to us in relation to the wardrobe department of the Elizabethan theatre and the kind of costumes assumed by our early actors, is mainly derived from the diaries or inventories of Philip Henslowe and his partner, Edward Alleyn, the founder of Dulwich College. Henslowe became a theatrical manager some time before 1592, trading also as a pawnbroker, and dealing rather usuriously with the players and playwrights about him. Alleyn married the step-daughter of Henslowe, and thereupon entered into partnership with him. Malone has made liberal extracts from Henslowe's inventories, which bear date 1598-99, and were once safely possessed by Dulwich College, but have now, for the most part, disappeared. Among the articles of dress enumerated appear "Longshank's suit;" "Tamberlane's breeches of crimson velvet," and the same hero's "coat with coper lace;" "Harye the Fifth's velvet

gown and satin doublet, laid with gold lace ;" Dido's robe and Juno's frock ; Robin Hood's hat and green coat ; and Merlin's gown and cape. Then there are gowns and caps for senators, suits for torchbearers and janissaries, shepherds' coats, yellow leather doublets for clowns, robes of rich taffety and damask, suits of russet and of frieze, fools' caps and bells, cloth of gold, French hose, surplices, shirts, farthingales, jerkins, and white cotton stockings. From another document, the cost of theatrical apparel may be fairly estimated. A list headed, "Note of all such goods as I have bought for the company of my Lord Admiral's men, since the 3rd April, 1598," has the sum paid for each article plainly stated, and contains such items as : "Bought a damask cassock, garded with velvet, eighteen shillings ;" "bought a payer of paned rownd hose of cloth, whiped with silk, drawn out with taffety, and one payer of long black woollen stockings, eight shillings ;" "bought a robe for to go invisibell and a gown for Nembia, three pounds ten shillings" (Malone conjecturing that the mysterious "robe for to go invisibell" pertained to some drama in which the wearer of the garment specified was supposed to be unseen by the rest of the performers) ; "bought a doublet of white satten layd thick with gold lace, and a pair of rowne paned hose of cloth of silver, the panes layd with gold lace, seven pounds ten shillings," and so on.

Alleyn's inventory still exists, or did exist very recently, in his own handwriting, at Dulwich College; it is without heading or date, and relates almost exclusively to the dresses worn by himself in his personation of various characters upon the stage. It is of interest, seeing that it demonstrates the assumption by Alleyn of various parts, if not in Shakespeare's plays, at any rate in the earlier dramas upon which the poet founded certain of his noblest works. Thus the actor's list makes mention of "a scarlet cloke with two brode gould laces with gould down the same, for Leir"—meaning, doubtless, "King Lear;" "a purple satin cloke, welted with velvett and silver twist, Romeo's;" "Hary the VIII. gowne;" "blew damask cote for the Moore in Venis;" and "spangled hoes in Pericles." Such entries as "Faustus jerkin and cloke," "Priams hoes in Dido," and "French hose for the Guises," evidence that the actor took part in Marlowe's "Faustus" and "Massacre of Paris," and the tragedy of "Dido," by Marlowe and Nash. Then there are cloaks and gowns, striped and trimmed with gold lace and ermine, suits of crimson, and orange-tawny velvet, cloth of gold and silver, jerkins and doublets of satin taffety and velvet, richly embroidered, and hose of various hues and patterns. The actor's wardrobe was clearly most costly and complete, and affords sufficient

proof that theatrical costumes generally, even at that early date, were of a luxurious nature. In considering the prices mentioned in Henslowe's list, the high value of money in his time should of course be borne in mind.

It is plain, however, that splendour was much more considered than appropriateness of dress. Some care might be taken to provide Robin Hood with a suit of Lincoln green ; to furnish hoods and frocks for friars and royal robes for kings ; but otherwise actors, dramatists, and audience demanded only that costly and handsome apparel should appear upon the scene. Indeed, the desire for correctness of dress upon the stage is of modern origin. Still, now and then may be found, even in very early days, some inclination towards carefulness in this respect : as when, in 1595, Thomas Nevile, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, applied to Lord Treasurer Burghley for the loan of the royal robes in the Tower, in order to perform, "for the exercise of young gentlemen and scholars in our college," certain comedies and one tragedy, in which "sondry personages of greatest estate were to be represented in ancient princely attire, which is nowhere to be had but within the office of the roabes of the Tower." This request, it seems, had been granted before, and probably was again complied with on this occasion. Indeed, at a much later date there was borrowing

from the stores of the Tower for the decoration of the stage ; as Pope writes :

Back fly the scenes and enter foot and horse :
Pageant on pageants in long order drawn,
Peers, heralds, bishops, ermine, gold and lawn ;
The champion, too ! And to complete the jest,
Old Edward's armour beams on Cibber's breast.

By way of reflecting the glories of the coronation of George II., "Henry VIII.," with a grand spectacle of a coronation, had been presented at the theatres, the armour of one of the kings of England having been brought from the Tower for the due accoutrement of the champion. And here we may note a curious gravitation of royal finery towards the theatre. Downes, in his "Roscius Anglicanus," describes Sir William Davenant's play of "Love and Honour," produced in 1662, as "richly cloathed, the king giving Mr. Betterton his coronation suit, in which he acted the part of Prince Alvaro ; the Duke of York giving Mr. Harris his, who did Prince Prospero ; and my lord of Oxford gave Mr. Joseph Price his, who did Lionel, the Duke of Parma's son." Presently we find the famous Mrs. Barry acting Queen Elizabeth in the coronation-robcs of James II.'s queen, who had before presented the actress with her wedding suit. Mrs. Barry is said to have given her audience a strong idea of Queen Elizabeth. Mrs. Bellamy played Cleopatra in a silver

tissue "birthday" dress that had belonged to the Princess of Wales ; and a suit of straw-coloured satin, from the wardrobe of the same illustrious lady, was worn by the famous Mrs. Woffington, in her performance of Roxana. The robes worn by Elliston, when he personated George IV., and represented the coronation of that monarch upon the stage of Drury Lane, were probably not the originals. These became subsequently the property of Madame Tussaud, and long remained among the treasures of her waxwork exhibition in Baker Street. A tradition prevails that Elliston's robes were carried to America by Lucius Junius Booth, the actor, who long continued to assume them in his personation of Richard III., much to the astonishment of the more simple-minded of his audience, who naïvely inquired of each other whether the sovereigns of Great Britain were really wont to parade the streets of London in such attire ? Among other royal robes that have likewise descended to the stage, mention may also be made of the coronation-dress of the late Queen Adelaide, of which Mrs. Mowatt, the American actress, became the ultimate possessor.

Many noblemen and fine gentlemen also favoured the actors with gifts of their cast clothes, and especially of those "birthday suits"—Court dresses of great splendour, worn for the first time at the birthday levées, or

drawing-rooms of the sovereign. As Pope writes :

Or when from Court a birthday suit bestowed,
Sinks the lost actor in the tawdry load.

Indeed, to some of the clothes worn by actors a complete history is attached. The wardrobe of Munden, the comedian, contained a black Genoa velvet coat, which had once belonged to King George II. ; while another coat boasted also a distinguished pedigree, and could be traced to Francis, Duke of Bedford, who had worn it on the occasion of the Prince of Wales's marriage. It had originally cost £1,000 ! But then it had been fringed with precious stones, of which the sockets only remained when it fell into the hands of the dealers in second-hand garments ; but, even in its dilapidated state, Munden had given £40 for it. Usually, however, fine clothes, such as " birthday suits," became the property rather of the tragedians than the comedians. Cibber describes the division on the subject of dress, existing in the " Commonwealth " company, of which he formed a member, in 1696. " The tragedians," he writes, " seemed to think their rank as much above the comedians as the characters they severally acted ; when the first were in their finery, the latter were impatient at the expense, and looked upon it as rather laid out upon the real than the fictitious person of the actor.

Nay, I have known in our company this ridiculous sort of regret carried so far that the tragedian has thought himself injured when the comedian pretended to wear a fine coat." Powel, the tragedian, surveying the dress worn by Cibber as Lord Foppington, fairly lost his temper, and complained, in rude terms, that he had not so good a suit in which to play *Cæsar Borgia*. Then, again, when Betterton proposed to "mount" a tragedy, the comic actors were sure to murmur at the cost of it. Dogget especially regarded with impatience "the costly trains and plumes of tragedy, in which, knowing himself to be useless, he thought they were all a vain extravagance." Tragedy, however, was certainly an expensive entertainment at this time. Dryden's "*All for Love*" had been revived at a cost of nearly £600 for dresses—"a sum unheard of for many years before on a like occasion." It was, by-the-way, the production of this tragedy, in preference to his "adaptation" of Shakespeare's "*Coriolanus*," that so bitterly angered Dennis, the critic, and brought about his fierce enmity to Cibber.

To the hero of tragedy a feathered head-dress was indispensable; the heroine demanded a long train borne by one or two pages. Pope writes :

Loud as the wolves on Orca's stormy steep
Howl to the roarings of the northern deep,
Such is the shout, the long-applauded note,
At Quin's high plume, or Oldfield's petticoat.

Hamlet speaks of a "forest of feathers"

as part of an actor's professional qualification. Addison, writing in the "Spectator" on the methods of aggrandising the persons in tragedy, denounces as ridiculous the endeavour to raise terror and pity in the audience by the dresses and decorations of the stage, and takes particular exception to the plumes of feathers worn by the conventional hero of tragedy, rising "so very high, that there is often a greater length from his chin to the top of his head than to the sole of his foot. One would believe that we thought a great man and a tall man the same thing." Then he describes the embarrassment of the actor, forced to hold his neck extremely stiff and steady all the time he speaks, when, "notwithstanding any anxieties which he pretends for his mistress, his country, or his friends, one may see by his action that his greatest care and concern is to keep the plume of feathers from falling off his head." The hero's "superfluous ornaments" having been discussed, the means by which the heroine is invested with grandeur are next considered: "The broad sweeping train that follows her in all her motions, finds constant employment for a boy who stands behind her, to open and spread it to advantage. I do not know how others are affected at this sight, but I must confess my eyes are wholly taken up with the page's part; and as for the queen, I am not so attentive to anything she speaks, as to the right adjusting of her train, lest it should

chance to trip up her heels, or incommode her as she walks to and fro upon the stage. It is, in my opinion, a very odd spectacle to see a queen venting her passion in a disordered motion, and a little boy taking care all the while that they do not ruffle the tail of her gown. The parts that the two persons act on the stage at the same time are very different ; the princess is afraid that she should incur the displeasure of the king, her father, or lose the hero, her lover, whilst her attendant is only concerned lest she should entangle her feet in her petticoat." In the same way Tate Wilkinson, writing in 1790 of the customs of the stage, as he had known it forty years before; describes the ladies as wearing large hoops and velvet petticoats, heavily embossed and extremely inconvenient and troublesome, with "always a page behind to hear the lovers' secrets, and keep the train in graceful decorum. If two princesses," he continues, "meet on the stage, with the frequent stage-crossings then practised, it would now seem truly entertaining to behold a page dangling at the tail of each heroine." The same writer, referring to the wardrobe he possessed as manager of the York and Hull theatres, describes the dresses as broadly seamed with gold and silver lace, after a bygone fashion that earned for them the contempt of London performers. "Yet," he proceeds, "those despicable clothes had, at different periods of time, bedecked real lords

and dukes," and were of considerable value, if only to strip of their decorations and take to pieces. He laments the general decline in splendour of dress, and declares that, thirty years ago not a Templar, or decently-dressed young man, but wore a rich gold-laced hat and scarlet waistcoat, with a broad gold lace, also laced frocks for morning dress.

Monmouth Street, St. Giles's, is now known by another name; but for many years its dealers in cast clothes rendered important aid to the actors and managers. It was to Monmouth Street, as he confesses, that Tate Wilkinson hastened, when permitted to undertake the part of the Fine Gentleman in Garrick's farce of "Lethe," at Covent Garden. For two guineas he obtained the loan, for one night only, of a heavy embroidered velvet spangled suit of clothes, "fit," he says, "for the king in 'Hamlet.'" Repeating the character, he was constrained to depend upon the wardrobe of the theatre, and appeared in "a very short old suit of clothes, with a black velvet ground and broad gold flowers, as dingy as the twenty-four letters on a piece of gilded gingerbread"—the dress, indeed, which Garrick had worn when playing Lothario, in "The Fair Penitent," ten years before. And it was to Monmouth Street that Austin repaired, when cast for a very inferior part—a mere attendant—in the same tragedy, in order to equip himself as like to Garrick as he could—for Garrick was to re-

appear as Lothario in a new suit of clothes. "Where did you get that coat from, Austin?" asked the great actor, surveying his subordinate. "Sir!" replied Austin, boldly, "it is part of my country wardrobe." The manager paused, frowned, reflected. Soon he was satisfied that the effect of Austin's dress would be injurious to his own, especially as Austin was of superior physical proportions. "Austin," he said at length, "why, perhaps you have some other engagement—besides, the part is really beneath you. Altogether, I will not trouble you to go on with me." And not to go on as an attendant upon Lothario was precisely what Austin desired.

O'Keeffe, in his "Memoirs," has related a curious instance of the prompt bestowal of an article of apparel upon an actor attached to the Crow Street Theatre, Dublin. Macklin's farce of "The True-born Irishman" was in course of performance for the first time. During what was known as "the Drum Scene" ("a 'rout' in London is called a 'drum' in Dublin," O'Keeffe explains)—when an actor, named Massink, had entered as the representative of Pat FitzMongrel—a gentleman, who with a large party occupied the stage-box, was seen to rise from his chair, with the view, as it seemed, of interrupting the performance. It should be stated that the gentleman was known to have recently inherited a large fortune, and had evinced a

certain eccentricity of disposition. He was now of opinion that an attempt was being made to personate him on the stage. "Why, that's me!" he cried aloud, pointing to the figure of Pat FitzMongrel. "But what sort of a rascally coat is that they've dressed me in! Here, I'll dress you, my man!" So saying he stood up, divested himself of the rich gold-laced coat he wore, and flung it on to the stage. "Massink took it up smiling, stepped to the wing, threw off his own, and returned upon the stage in the gentleman's fine coat, which produced the greatest applause and pleasure among the audience."

To suit the dress demands the actor's art,
Yet there are some who overdress the part.
To some prescriptive right gives settled things—
Black wig to murderers, feathered hats to kings.
But Michael Cassio might be drunk enough,
Though all his features were not grimed with snuff.
Why should Poll Peachum shine in satin clothes?
Why every devil dance in scarlet hose?

Thus in regard to the conventionalism of stage costumes wrote Churchill's friend, Robert Lloyd, in his poem of "The Actor," 1762. And something he might have added touching the absurd old fashion of robing the queens of tragedy invariably in black, for it seemed agreed generally that "the sceptred pall of gorgeous tragedy" should be taken very literally, and should "sweep by" in the funereal fashion of sable velvet. "Empresses and queens," writes Mrs. Bellamy, the actress, in

1785, "always appeared in black velvet, with, upon extraordinary occasions, the additional finery of an embroidered or tissue petticoat; the younger actresses in cast gowns of persons of quality, or altered habits rather soiled; whilst the male portion of the *dramatis personæ* strutted in tarnished laced coats and waistcoats, full bottom or tie wigs, and black worsted stockings." Yet the lady once ventured to appear as Lady Macbeth, and to wear the while a dress of white satin. This took place at Edinburgh, and the startling innovation was only to be accounted for by the fact that the wardrobes of the actresses and of the company she had joined had been accidentally consumed by fire. Some portion of the theatre had been also destroyed, but boards were hastily nailed down and covered with carpets, so as to form a temporary stage until the damage could be repaired. Meantime appeal was made to the ladies of Edinburgh to lend clothes to the "burnt out" actress, who estimated the loss of her theatrical finery at £900, there being among the ashes of her property "a complete set of garnets and pearls, from cap to stomacher." Dresses of various kinds poured in, however. "Before six o'clock I found myself in possession of above forty, and some of these almost new, as well as very rich. Nor did the ladies confine themselves to outward garments only. I received presents of all kinds and from every part of the adjacent

country." But inasmuch as "no black vestment of any kind had been sent among the numerous ones of different colours which had been showered upon me by the ladies," the necessity arose for dressing Lady Macbeth for the very first time in white satin.

Mrs. Bellamy, according to her own account, had been wont to take great pains and to exercise much good taste in regard to the costume she assumed upon the stage. She claimed to have discarded hooped skirts, while those unwieldy draperies were still greatly favoured by other actresses, and to have adopted a style of dress remarkable for an elegant simplicity then very new to the stage. Still, the lady has freely admitted that she could be very gorgeous upon occasions; and concerning one of two grand tragedy dresses she had obtained from Paris, she has something of a history to narrate. The play was to be the "Alexander" of Nat Lee; the rival actresses were to appear—Mrs. Bellamy as Statira, and the famous Mrs. Woffington as Roxana. The ladies did not love each other—rival actresses oftentimes do not love each other—and each possessed a temper. Moreover, each was a beauty: Mrs. Woffington, a grand brunette, dark browed, with flashing eyes and stately mien; Mrs. Bellamy, a blonde, blue-eyed and golden-haired—an accomplished actress, if an affected one. Now, Mrs. Bellamy's grand dress of deep yellow satin, with a robe of rich purple velvet, was

found to have a most injurious effect upon the delicate straw-coloured skirts of Mrs. Woffington; they seemed to be reduced to a dirty white hue. The ladies fairly quarrelled over their dresses. At length, if we may adopt Mrs. Bellamy's account of the proceeding, Mrs. Woffington's rage was so kindled "that it nearly bordered on madness. When, oh! dire to tell! she drove me off the carpet and gave me the *coup de grâce* almost behind the scenes. The audience, who, I believe, preferred hearing my last dying speech to seeing her beauty and fine attitude, could not avoid perceiving her violence, and testified their displeasure at it." Possibly the scene excited mirth in an equal degree. Foote forthwith prepared a burlesque, "The Green-room Squabble; or, A Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius." The same tragedy, it may be noted, had at an earlier date been productive of discord in the theatre. Mrs. Barry, as Roxana, had indeed stabbed her Statira, Mrs. Boutell, with such violence that the dagger, although the point was blunted, "made its way through Mrs. Boutell's stays and entered about a quarter of an inch into the flesh." It is not clear, however, that this contest, like the other, is to be attributed to antagonism in the matter of dress.

The characteristics of the "tiring-room" have always presented themselves in a ludic-

rous light to the ordinary observer. There is always a jumble of incongruous articles, and a striking contrast between the ambitious pretensions of things and their real meanness—between the facts and fictions of theatrical life. Mr. Collier quotes from Brome's comedy, "The Antipodes," 1640, a curious account of the contents of the "tiring-house" of that time. Byeplay, an actor, one of the characters, is speaking of the hero Peregrine, who is in some sort a reflection of Don Quixote :

He has got into our tiring-house amongst us,
And ta'en a strict survey of all our properties.

* * * *

Whether he thought 'twas some enchanted castle,
Or temple hung and piled with monuments
Of uncouth and of varied aspects
I dive not to his thoughts. . . .
But on a sudden, with thrice knightly force,
And thrice thrice puissant arm, he snatched down
The sword and shield that I played Bevis with;
Rusheth among the foressaid properties,
Kills monster after monster, takes the puppets
Prisoners, knocks down the Cyclops, tumbles all
Our jigambobs and trinkets to the wall.
Spying at last the crown and royal robes
I' the upper wardrobe, next to which by chance,
The devils' vizors hung and their flame-painted
Skin-coats, these he removed with greater fury,
And (having cut the infernal ugly faces
All into mammoicks), with a reverend hand
He takes the imperial diadem, and crowns
Himself King of the Antipodes, and believes
He has justly gained the kingdom by his conquest.

A later dealing with the same subject may be quoted from Dr. Reynardson's poem of "The

Stage," dedicated to Addison, and first published in 1713 :

High o'er the stage there lies a rambling frame,
Which men a garret vile, but players the tire-room name:
Here all their stores (a merry medley) sleep
Without distinction, huddled in a heap.
Hung on the self-same peg, in union rest
Young Tarquin's trousers and Lucretia's vest,
Whilst, without pulling coifs, Roxana lays,
Close by Satira's petticoat, her stays. . . .
Near these sets up a dragon-drawn calash;
There's a ghost's doublet, delicately slashed,
Bleeds from the mangled breast and gapes a frightful gash . . .
Here Iris bends her various-painted arch,
There artificial clouds in sullen order march;
Here stands a crown upon a rack, and there
A witch's broomstick by great Hector's spear:
Here stands a throne, and there the cynic's tub,
Here Bullock's cudgel, and there Alcides' club.
Beards, plumes, and spangles in confusion rise,
Whilst rocks of Cornish diamonds reach the skies;
Crests, corsets, all the pomp of battle join
In one effulgence, one promiscuous shine.
Hence all the drama's decorations rise,
Hence gods descend majestic from the skies,
Hence playhouse chiefs, to grace some antique tale,
Buckle their coward limbs in warlike mail, &c. &c.

Of the theatrical wardrobe department of to-day it is unnecessary to say much. Something of the bewildering incongruity of the old "tiring-room" distinguishes it—yet with a difference. The system of the modern theatre has undergone changes. Wardrobes are now often hired complete from the costume and masquerade shops. The theatrical costumier has become an independent functionary, boasting an establishment of his own, detached from

the theatre. Costume plays are not much in vogue now, and in dramas dealing with life and society at the present date, the actors are understood to provide their own attire. Moreover, there is now little varying of the programme, and, in consequence, little demand upon the stock wardrobe of the playhouse. Still, when in theatres of any pretension entertainments in the nature of spectacles or pantomimes are in course of preparation, there is much stir in the wardrobe department. There are bales of cloth to be converted into apparel for the supernumeraries, yards and yards of gauze and muslin for the ballet; spangles, and beads, and copper lace in great profusion; with high piles of white satin shoes. Numerous stitchers of both sexes are at work early and late, while from time to time an artist supervises their labours. His aid has been sought in the designing of the costumes, so that they may be of graceful and novel devices in fanciful or eccentric plays, or duly correct when an exhibition, depending at all upon the history of the past, is about to be presented by the manager.

CHAPTER XVI.

“HER FIRST APPEARANCE.”

FROM the south-western corner of Lincoln's Inn Fields a winding and confined court leads to Vere Street, Clare Market. Midway or so in the passage there formerly existed Gibbon's Tennis Court—an establishment, which after the Restoration, and for some three years, served as a playhouse; altogether distinct, be it remembered, from the far more famous Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, situate close by in Portugal Street, at the back of the College of Surgeons. Nevertheless, the Vere Street Theatre, as it was called, can boast something of a history; at any rate, one event of singular dramatic importance renders it memorable. For on Saturday, the 8th of December, 1660, as historians of the drama relate, it was the scene of the first appearance upon the English stage of the first English actress. The lady played Desdemona; and a certain Mr. Thomas Jordan, an actor and the author of

various poetical pieces, provided for delivery upon the occasion a "Prologue to introduce the first woman that came to act on the stage in the tragedy called 'The Moor of Venice.'"

So far the story is clear enough. But was this Desdemona really the first English actress? Had there not been earlier change in the old custom prescribing that the heroines of the British drama should be personated by boys? It is certain that French actresses had appeared here so far back as 1629. Prynne, in his "*Histriomastix*," published in 1633, writes: "They have now their female players in Italy and other foreign parts, and Michaelmas, 1629, they had French women-actors in a play personated at Blackfriars, to which there was great resort." These ladies, however, it may be noted, met with a very unfavourable reception. Prynne's denunciation of them was a matter of course. He had undertaken to show that stage plays of whatever kind were most "pernicious corruptions," and that the profession of "play-poets" and stage-players, together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of stage-plays, were unlawful, infamous, and misbecoming Christians. He speaks of the "women-actors" as "monsters," and applies most severe epithets to their histrionic efforts: "impudent," "shameful," "unwomanish," and such like. Another critic, one Thomas Brande, in a private letter discovered by Mr. Payne Collier in the library of Lambeth Palace, and probably

addressed to Laud while Bishop of London, writes of the just offence to all virtuous and well-disposed persons in this town "given by the vagrant French players who had been expelled from their own country," and adds: "Glad am I to say they were hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted" (pippin-pelted is a good phrase) "from the stage, so as I do not think they will soon be ready to try the same again." Mr. Brande was further of opinion that the Master of the Revels should have been called to account for permitting such performances. Failing at Blackfriars, the French company subsequently appeared at the Fortune and Red Bull Theatres, but with a similar result, inasmuch that the Master of the Revels, Sir Henry Herbert, who had duly sanctioned their performance, records in his accounts that, "in respect of their ill luck," he had returned some portion of the fees they had paid him for permission to play.

Whether these French "women-actors" failed because of their sex or because of their nationality, cannot now be shown. They were the first actresses that had ever been seen in this country. But then they were not of English origin, and they appeared, of course, in a foreign drama. Still, of English actresses antecedent to the Desdemona of the Vere Street Theatre, certain traces have been discovered. In Brome's comedy of "The Court Beggar," acted at the Cockpit Theatre, in

1632, one of the characters observed : " If you have a short speech or two, the boy's a pretty actor, and his mother can play her part ; women-actors now grow in request." Was this an allusion merely to the French actresses that had been seen in London some few years before, or were English actresses referred to ? Had these really appeared, if not at the public theatres, why, then, at more private dramatic entertainments ? Upon such points doubt must still prevail. It seems certain, however, that a Mrs. Coleman had presented herself upon the stage in 1656, playing a part in Sir William Davenant's tragedy of "The Siege of Rhodes"—a work produced somehow in evasion of the Puritanical ordinance of 1647, which closed the theatres and forbade dramatic exhibitions of every kind ; for "The Siege of Rhodes," although it consisted in a great measure of songs with recitative, explained or illustrated by painted scenery, did not differ much from an ordinary play. Ianthe, the heroine, was personated by Mrs. Coleman, whose share in the performance was confined to the delivery of recitative. Ten years later the lady was entertained at his house by Mr. Pepys, who speaks in high terms both of her musical abilities and of herself, pronouncing her voice "decayed as to strength, but mighty sweet, though soft, and a pleasant jolly woman, and in mighty good humour."

If this Mrs. Coleman may be classed rather

as a singer than an actress, and if we may view Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes" more as a musical entertainment than as a regular play, then no doubt the claim of the Desdemona of Clare Market to be, as Mr. Thomas Jordan described her, "the first woman that came to act on the stage," is much improved. And here we may say something more relative to the Vere Street Theatre. It was first opened in the month of November, 1660; Thomas Killigrew, its manager, and one of the grooms of the king's bedchamber, having received his patent in the previous August, when a similar favour was accorded to Sir William Davenant, who, during Charles I.'s reign had been possessed of letters patent. King Charles II., taking it into his "princely consideration" that it was not necessary to suppress the use of theatres, but that if the evil and scandal in the plays then acted were taken away, they might serve "as innocent and harmless divertisement" for many of his subjects, and having experience of the art and skill of his trusty and well-beloved Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant, granted them full power to elect two companies of players, and to purchase, build and erect, or hire, two houses or theatres, with all convenient rooms and other necessities thereunto appertaining, for the representation of tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, and all other entertainments of that nature. The managers were also autho-

rised to fix such rates of admission as were customary or reasonable "in regard of the great expenses of scenes, music, and such new decorations as have not been formerly used ;" with full power "to make such allowances out of that which they shall so receive to the actors and other persons employed in the same representations, in both houses respectively, as they shall think fit." For these patents other grants were afterwards substituted, Davenant receiving his new letters on January 15th, and Killigrew *his* on April 25th, 1662. The new grants did not differ much from the old ones, except that the powers vested in the patentees were more fully declared. No other companies but those of the two patentees were to be permitted to perform within the cities of London and Westminster ; all others were to be silenced and suppressed. Killigrew's actors were styled the "Company of his Majesty and his Royal Consort ;" Davenant's the "Servants of his Majesty's dearly-beloved brother James, Duke of York." The better to preserve "amity and correspondence" between the two theatres, no actor was to be allowed to quit one company for the other without the consent of his manager being first obtained. And forasmuch as many plays formerly acted contained objectionable matter, and the women's parts therein being acted by men in the habits of women, gave offence to some, the managers were farther enjoined to act no plays "containing any

passages offensive to piety and good manners, until they had first corrected and purged the same ;" and permission was given that all the women's parts to be acted by either of the companies for the time to come might be performed by women, so that recreations which, by reason of the abuses aforesaid, were scandalous and offensive, might by such reformation be esteemed not only harmless delights, but useful and instructive representations of human life to such of "our good subjects" as should resort to see the same.

These patents proved a cause of numberless dissensions in future years. Practically they reduced the London theatres to two. Before the Civil War there had been six: the Blackfriars and the Globe, belonging to the same company, called the King's Servants; the Cockpit or Phoenix in Drury Lane, the actors of which were called the Queen's Servants; a theatre in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, occupied by the Prince's Servants; and the Fortune in Golden Lane, and the Red Bull in St. John Street, Clerkenwell—establishments for the lower class, "mostly frequented by citizens and the meaner sort of people." Earlier Elizabethan theatres, the Swan, the Rose, and the Hope, seem to have closed their career some time in the reign of James I.

The introduction of actresses upon the English stage has usually been credited to Sir William Davenant, whose theatre, however,

did not open until more than six months after the performance of "Othello," with an actress in the part of Desdemona, at Killigrew's establishment in Vere Street. "Went to Sir William Davenant's opera," records Pepys on July 2nd, 1661, "this being the fourth day it hath begun, and the first that I have seen it." Although regular tragedies and comedies were acted there, Pepys constantly speaks of Davenant's theatre as the *opera*, the manager having produced various musical pieces before the Restoration. Of the memorable performance of "Othello" in Vere Street on December 10th, 1660, Pepys makes no mention. He duly chronicles, however, a visit to Killigrew's theatre on the following 3rd January, when he saw the comedy of "The Beggar's Bush" performed; "it being very well done, and was the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." He had seen the same play in the previous November, when it was represented by male performers only. But even after the introduction of actresses the heroines of the stage were still occasionally impersonated by men. Thus in January, 1661, Pepys saw Kynaston appear in "The Silent Woman," and pronounced the young actor "the prettiest woman in the whole house." As Cibber states, the stage "could not be so suddenly supplied with women but that there was still a necessity to put the handsomest young men into petticoats."

Strange to say, the name of the actress who played Desdemona under Killigrew's management in 1660 has not been discovered. Who, then, was the first English actress, assuming that she was the Desdemona of the Vere Street Theatre? She must be looked for in Killigrew's company. His "leading lady" was Mrs. Ann Marshall, of whom Pepys makes frequent mention, who is known to have obtained distinction alike in tragedy and in comedy, and to have personated such characters as the heroine of Beaumont and Fletcher's "Scornful Lady," Roxana in "Alexander the Great," Calphurnia in "Julius Cæsar," Evadne in "The Maid's Tragedy," and so on; there is no record, however, of her having appeared in the part of Desdemona. Indeed, this part is not invariably assumed by "leading ladies;" it has occasionally devolved upon the *seconda donna* of the company. And in a representation of "Othello" on February 6th, 1669, at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane (to which establishment Killigrew and his troop had removed from Vere Street in April, 1663), it is certain, on the evidence of Downes's "Roscius Anglicanus," that a Mrs. Hughes played the part of Desdemona to the Othello of Burt, the Iago of Mohun, and the Cassio of Hart. Now, was this Mrs. Hughes, who had been a member of Killigrew's company from the first, the Desdemona on whose behalf, nine years before, Mr. Thomas Jordan wrote

his apologetic prologue? It seems not unlikely. At the same time it must be stated that there are other claimants to the distinction. Tradition long pointed to Mrs. Betterton, the wife of the famous tragedian, as the first woman who ever appeared on the English stage. She was originally known as Mrs. Saunderson—the title of Mistress being applied alike to maidens and matrons at the time of the Restoration—and married her illustrious husband about the year 1663. She was one of four principal actresses whom Sir William Davenant lodged at his own house, and she appeared with great success as Ianthe upon the opening of his theatre with “The Siege of Rhodes.” Pepys, indeed, repeatedly refers to her by her dramatic name of Ianthe. Has the belief that she was the first actress arisen from confusing her assumption of Ianthe with the performance of the same part by Mrs. Coleman in 1656, a fact of which mention has already been made? Otherwise it is hardly credible that she, one of Davenant’s actresses, had been previously attached to Killigrew’s company, and had in such wise chanced to play Desdemona in Vere Street. There is no evidence of this whatever, nor can it be discovered that she appeared as Desdemona at any period of her career. The Vere Street Desdemona, we repeat, must be looked for in Killigrew’s company, which commenced operations more than half a year before the rival theatre. It is true that some time

before the opening of this theatre Davenant had been the responsible manager in regard to certain performances at the Blackfriars Theatre and elsewhere ; but there is no reason to suppose that actresses took part in these entertainments ; it is known, indeed, that the feminine characters in the plays exhibited were sustained by the young actors of the company—Kynaston, James Nokes, Angel, and William Betterton. Altogether, Mrs. Betterton's title to honour as the first English actress seems defective ; and as much may be said of the pretensions of another actress, Mrs. Norris, although she has met with support from Tom Davies in his "Dramatic Miscellanies," and from Curl in his "History of the Stage," a very unworthy production. Mrs. Norris was an actress of small note attached to Davenant's company ; she was the mother of Henry Norris, a popular comedian, surnamed "Jubilee Dicky," from his performance of the part of Dicky in Farquhar's "Constant Couple." Chetwood correctly describes her as "ONE of the first women that came on the stage as an actress." To her, as to Mrs. Betterton, the objection applies that she was a member of Davenant's company—not of Killigrew's—and therefore could not have appeared in Vere Street. Moreover, she never attained such a position in her profession as would have entitled her to assume a part of the importance of Desdemona.

On the whole, the case of Mrs. Hughes seems

to have the support of more probabilities than any other. But even if it is to be accepted as a fact that she was in truth the first actress, there the matter remains. Very little is known of the lady. She lived in a world which kept scarcely any count of its proceedings—which left no records behind to be used as evidence either for or against it. She was in her time the subject of talk enough, very likely; was admired for her beauty, possibly for her talents too; but hardly a written scrap concerning her has come down to us. The ordinary historian of the time, impressed with a sense of the dignity of his task, did not concern himself with the players, and rated as insignificant and unworthy of his notice such matters as the pursuits, pastimes, tastes, manners, and customs of the people. We know more of the manner of life in Charles II.'s time from the diarist Pepys than from all the writers of history put together. Unfortunately, concerning Mrs. Hughes, even Pepys is silent. It is known that, in addition to the character of Desdemona, which she certainly sustained in February, 1669, at any rate, she also appeared as Panura, in Fletcher's "Island Princess," and as Theodosia, in Dryden's comedy of "An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer," to the Jacyntha of Nell Gwynne; there is scarcely a record of her assumption of any other part, unless she be the same Mrs. Hughes who impersonated Mrs. Monylove in a comedy called "Tom

Essence," produced at the Dorset Garden Theatre in 1676. But it is believed that she quitted or was taken from her profession—was "erept the stage," to employ old Downes's phrase—at an earlier date. The famous Prince Rupert of the Rhine was her lover. He bought for her, at a cost of £20,000, the once magnificent seat of Sir Nicholas Crispe, near Hammer-smith, which afterwards became the residence of the Margrave of Brandenburg; and at a later date the retreat of Queen Caroline, the wife of George IV. Ruperta, the daughter of Mrs. Hughes, was married to Lieutenant-General Howe, and, surviving her husband many years, died at Somerset House about 1740. In the "Memoirs" of Count Grammont mention is found of Prince Rupert's passion for the actress. She is stated to have "brought down and greatly subdued his natural fierceness." She is described as an impertinent gipsy, and accused of pride, in that she conducted herself, all things considered, unselfishly, and even with some dignity. The King is said to have been "greatly pleased with this event"—he was probably amused at it; Charles II. was very willing at all times to be amused—"for which great rejoicings" (why rejoicings?) "were made at Tunbridge; but nobody was bold enough to make it the subject of satire, though the same constraint was not observed with other ridiculous personages." Upon the Prince the effect of his love seems to have been

marked enough. "From this time adieu alembics, crucibles, furnaces, and all the black furniture of the forges; a complete farewell to all mathematical instruments and chemical speculations; sweet powder and essences were now the only ingredients that occupied any share of his attention." Farther of Mrs. Hughes there is nothing to relate, with the exception of the use made of her name by the unseemly and unsavoury Tom Brown in his "Letters from the Dead to the Living." Mrs. Hughes and Nell Gwynne are supposed to address letters to each other, exchanging reproaches in regard to the impropriety of their manner of life. Nell Gwynne accuses her correspondent of squandering her money and of gaming. "I am ashamed to think that a woman who had wit enough to tickle a Prince out of so fine an estate should at last prove such a fool as to be bubbled of it by a little spotted ivory and painted paper." "Peg Hughes," as she is called, replies, congratulating herself upon her generosity, treating the loss of her estate as "the only piece of carelessness I ever committed worth my boast," and charging "Madam Gwynne" with vulgar avarice and the love of "lucre of base coin." We can glean nothing more of the story of Mrs. Hughes.

It is uncertain indeed in what degree the advent of the first actress affected her audience; whether the novelty of the proceeding

gratified or shocked them the more. It was really a startling innovation—a wonderful improvement as it seems to us; yet assuredly there were numerous conservative playgoers who held fast to the old ways of the theatre, and approved "boy-actresses"—not needing such aids to illusion as the personation of women by women, but rather objecting thereto, for the same reason that they deprecated the introduction of scenery, because of appeal and stimulus to the imagination of the audience becoming in such wise greatly and perilously reduced. Then of course there were staid and sober folk who judged the profession of the stage to be most ill-suited for women. And certainly this view of the matter was much confirmed by the conduct of our earlier actresses, which was indeed open to the gravest reproach. From Mr. Jordan's prologue may be gathered some notion of the situation of the spectators on the night, or rather the afternoon, of December 8th, 1660. The theatre was probably but a poor-looking structure, hastily put together in the Tennis-court to serve the purpose of the manager for a time merely. Seven years later, Tom Killigrew, talking to Mr. Pepys, boasted that the stage had become "by his pains a thousand times better and more glorious than ever before." There had been improvement in the candles; the audience were more civilised; the orchestra had been increased; the rushes had been

swept from the stage; everything that had been mean was now "all otherwise." The manager possibly had in his mind during this retrospect the condition of the Vere Street Theatre while under his management. The audience possessed an unruly element. 'Prentices and servants filled the gallery; there were citizens and tradesmen in the pit, with yet a contingent of spruce gallants and scented fops, who combed their wigs during the pauses in the performance, took snuff, ogled the ladies in the boxes, and bantered the orange-girls. The prologue begins:

I come, unknown to any of the rest,
To tell the news: I saw the lady drest—
The woman plays to-day; mistake me not,
No man in gown or page in petticoat.

* * *
'Tis possible a virtuous woman may
Abhor all sorts of looseness and yet play;
Play on the stage—where all eyes are upon her:
Shall we count that a crime France counts an honour?
In other kingdoms husbands safely trust 'em.
The difference lies only in the custom.

The gentlemen sitting in that "Star Chamber of the house, the pit," were then besought to think respectfully and modestly of the actress, and not to run "to give her visits when the play is done." We have then a picture of the male performers of female characters:

But to the point: in this reforming age
We have intent to civilise the stage.
Our women are defective, and so sized
You'd think they were some of the guard disguised;

For, to speak truth, men act, that are between
Forty and fifty, wenches of fifteen;
With bone so large and nerve so incompressible,
When you call Desdemona, *enter giant*.

The prologue concludes with a promise, which certainly was not kept, that the drama should be purged of all offensive matter :

And when we've put all things in this fair way,
Barebones himself may come to see a play.

In the epilogue the spectators were asked, "How do you like her?"—especial appeal being made to those among the audience of the gentler sex :

But, ladies, what think *you*? For if you tax
Her freedom with dishonour to your sex,
She means to act no more, and this shall be
No other play but her own tragedy.
She will submit to none but your commands,
And take commission only from your hands.

The ladies, no doubt, applauded sufficiently, and "woman-actors" from that time forward became more and more secure of their position in the theatre. At the same time it would seem that there lingered in the minds of many a certain prejudice against them, and that some apprehension concerning the reception they might obtain from the audience often occupied the managers. A prologue to the second part of Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes," acted in April, 1662, demonstrates that the matter had still to be dealt with cautiously. Indulgence is besought for the bashful fears of the actresses, and their shrinking from the

judgment and observation of the wits and critics is much dwelt upon.

It is worthy of note that the leading actors who took part in the representation of "Othello" at the Vere Street Theatre had all in early life been apprentices to older players, and accustomed to personate the heroines of the stage. Thus Burt, the Othello of the cast, had served as a boy under the actors Shanke and Beeston at the Blackfriars and Cockpit Theatres respectively. Mohun, the Iago, had been his play-fellow at this time; so that when Burt appeared as Clariana in Shirley's tragedy of "Love's Cruelty," Mohun represented Bellamonte in the same work. During the Civil War Mohun had drawn his sword for the king, acquiring the rank of major, and acquitting himself as a soldier with much distinction. He was celebrated by Lord Rochester as the *Æsopus* of the stage; Nat Lee delighted in his acting, exclaiming, "O Mohun, Mohun, thou little man of mettle, if I should write a hundred plays, I'd write one for thy mouth!" and King Charles ventured to pun upon his name as badly as even a king might when he said of some representation, "Mohun (pronounce *Moon*) shone like the sun; Hart like the moon!" Charles Hart, the Cassio of the Vere Street Theatre, could boast descent from Shakespeare's sister Joan, and described himself as the poet's great-nephew. He, too, fought for the King in the great Civil War,

serving as a lieutenant of horse under Sir Thomas Dallison in Prince Rupert's regiment. He had been apprenticed to Robinson the actor, and had played women's parts at the Blackfriars Theatre, winning special renown by his performance of the Duchess in Shirley's tragedy of "The Cardinal." As an actor Hart won extraordinary admiration; he soon took the lead of Burt, and from his physical gifts and graces was enabled even to surpass Mohun in popularity. He introduced Nell Gwynne to the stage, and became one of the sharers in the management and profits of the theatrical company to which he was attached.

There was soon an ample supply of actresses, and a decline altogether in the demand for boy-performers of female characters. There was an absolute end, indeed, of that industry; the established actors had no more apprentices, now to serve as their footboys and pages, and now as heroines of tragedy and comedy. A modern playgoer may well have a difficulty in believing that these had ever any real existence, sharing Lamb's amazement at a boy-Juliet, a boy-Desdemona, a boy-Ophelia. There must have been much skill among the players; much simple good faith, contentment, and willingness to connive at theatrical illusion on the part of the audience. It must have been hard to tolerate a heroine with too obvious a beard, or of very perceptible masculine breadth of shoulders, length of limb, and freedom of

gait. Let us note in conclusion that there is clearly a "boy-actress" among the players welcomed by Hamlet to Elsinore, although the modern stage has rarely taken note of the fact. The player-queen, when not robed for performance in the tragedy of "The Mouse-trap," should wear a boy's dress. "What, my young lady and mistress!" says Hamlet jestingly to the youthful apprentice; and he adds allusion to the boy's increase of stature: "By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a *chopine*!"—in other words, "How the boy has grown!"—a chopine being a shoe with a heel of inordinate height. And then comes reference to that change of voice from alto to bass which attends advance from boyhood to adolescence.

CHAPTER XVII.

STAGE WHISPERS.

WHEN the consummate villain of melodrama mysteriously approaches the footlights, and, with a scowl at the front row of the pit, remarks, "I must dissemble," or some such words to that effect, it is certain that he is perfectly audible in all parts of the theatre in which he performs ; and yet it is required of the personages nearest to him on the stage—let us say, the rival lover he has resolved to despatch and the beauteous heroine he has planned to betray—that they should pretend to be absolutely deaf to his observation, the manifest gravity of its bearing upon their interests and future happiness notwithstanding. Moreover, we who are among the spectators are bound to credit this curious auricular infirmity on the part of the lover and the lady. We can of course hear perfectly well the speech of their playfellow, and are thoroughly aware that from their position they must of

necessity hear it at least as distinctly as we do. Yet it is incumbent upon us to ignore our convictions and perceptions on this head. For, indeed, the drama depends for its due existence and conduct upon a system of connivance and conspiracy, in which the audience, no less than the actors, are comprehended. The make-shifts and artifices of the theatre have to be met half-way, and indulgently accepted.

The stage could not live without its whispers, which, after all, are only whispers in a non-natural sense. For that can hardly be in truth a whisper, which is designed to reach the ears of some hundreds of persons. But the "asides" of the theatre are a convenient and indispensable method of revealing to the audience the state of mind of the speaker, and of admitting them to his confidence. The novelist can stop his story, and indulge in analytical descriptions of his characters, their emotions, moods, intentions, and opinions; but the dramatist can only make his creatures intelligible by means of the speeches he puts into their mouths. So, for the information of the audience and the carrying on of the business of the scene, we have soliloquies and asides, the artful delivery of which, duly to secure attention and enlist sympathy, evokes the best abilities of the player, bound to invest with an air of nature and truth-seeming purely fictitious and unreasonable proceedings.

But there are other than these recognised.

and established whispers of the stage. Voices are occasionally audible in the theatre which obviously were never intended to reach the public ear. The existence of such a functionary as the prompter may be one of those things which are "generally known;" but the knowledge should not come, to those who sit in front of the curtain, from any exercise of their organs of sight or of sound. To do the prompter justice, he is rarely visible, but his tones, however still and small they may pretend to be, sometimes travel to those whom they do not really concern. One of the first scraps of information acquired by the theatrical student relates to the meaning of the letters P. S. and O. P. Otherwise he might, perhaps, have some difficulty in comprehending the apparently magnetic attraction which one particular side of the proscenium has for so many of our players. We say *our* players advisedly, for the position of the prompter is different on the foreign stage. Abroad, and, indeed, during alien and lyrical performances in this country, he is hidden in a sort of gipsy-tent in front of the desk of the conductor. The accommodation provided for him is limited enough: little more than his head can be permitted to emerge from the hole cut for him in the stage. But his situation has its advantages. He cannot possibly be seen by the audience; he can conveniently instruct the performers without requiring them "to look

off" appealingly, or to rush desperately to the wing to be reminded of their parts; while the sloping roof of his temporary abode has the effect of directing his whispers on to the stage, and away from the spectators. It seems strange that this system of posting the prompter in the van instead of on the flank of the actors has never been permanently adopted in this country. But our stage is steeped in the densest Toryism, and a change of the kind indicated would certainly be energetically denounced by a number of very respectable and sensible people as "un-English," an objection that is generally regarded as quite final and convincing, although it is conceivable, at any rate, that a thing may be of fair value and yet of foreign origin. "Gad, sir, if a few very sensible persons had been attended to we should still have been champing acorns!" observed Luttrell the witty, when certain enlightened folk strenuously opposed the building of Waterloo Bridge on the plea that it would spoil the river.

It is certain, however, that with the first introduction here of operatic performances came the gipsy-tent, or hut, of the prompter. The singers voted it quite indispensable. It was much ridiculed, of course, by the general public. It was even made the special subject of burlesque on a rival stage. A century ago the imbecility was indulged in of playing "The Beggar's Opera" with "the characters

reversed," as it was called ; that is to say, the female characters were assumed by the actors, the male by the actresses. This was at the Haymarket Theatre, under George Colman's management. The foolish proceeding won prodigious applause. A prologue or preliminary act in three scenes was written for the occasion. The fun of this introduction seems now gross and flat enough. Towards the conclusion of it, we read, a stage carpenter raised his head through a trap in the centre of the stage. He was greeted with a roar of laughter from the gallery. The prompter appears on the scene and demands of the carpenter what he means by opening the trap ? The carpenter explains that he designs to prompt the performers after the fashion of the Opera House on the other side of the Haymarket. "Psha !" cries the prompter, "none of your Italian tricks with me ! Shut up the trap again ! I shall prompt in my old place ; for we won't do all they do on the other side of the way, till they can do all we do on ours." So soundly English a speech is received with great cheering—the foreigners and their new-fangled ways are laughed to scorn, and the performance is a very complete success.

To singers, the convenient position of the prompter is a matter of real importance. Their memories are severely tried, for, in addition to the words, they have to bear in

mind the music of their parts. While delivering their scenes they are compelled to remain almost stationary, well in front of the stage, so that their voices may be thrown towards their audience and not lose effect by escaping into the flies. Meanwhile, their hasty movement towards a prompter in the wings, upon any sudden forgetfulness of the words of their songs, would be most awkward and unseemly. It is very necessary that their prompter and their conductor should be their near neighbours, able to render them assistance and support upon the shortest notice. But this proximity of the prompter has, perhaps, induced them to rely too much upon his help, and to burden their memories too little. The majority of singers are but indifferently acquainted with the words they are required to utter. They gather these as they want them, from the hidden friend in his hutch at their feet. The occupants of the proscenium boxes at the opera-houses must be familiarly acquainted with the tones of the prompter's voice, as he delivers to the singers, line by line, the matter of their parts, and occasionally these stage whispers are audible at a greater distance from the foot-lights. In operatic performances, however, the words are of very inferior importance to the music; the composer quite eclipses the author. A musician has been known to call a libretto the "verbiage" of his opera. The term was not

perhaps altogether inappropriate. Even actors are apt to underrate the importance of the speeches they are called upon to deliver, laying the greater stress upon the "business" they propose to originate, or the scenic effects that are to be introduced into the play. They sometimes describe the words of their parts as "cackle." But perhaps this term also may be accepted as applying, fitly enough, to much of the dialogue of the modern drama.

It is a popular notion that, although all persons may not be endowed with histrionic gifts, it is open to everybody to perform the duties of a prompter without preparation or study. Still the office requires some exercise of care and judgment. "Here's a nice mess you've got me into," said once a tragedian, imperfect in his text, to an inexperienced or incautious prompter. "What am I to do now? Thanks to you, I've been and spoken all the next act!" And the prompter has a task of serious difficulty before him when the actors are but distantly acquainted with their parts, or "shy of the syls," that is, syllables, as they prefer to describe their condition. "Where have they got to now?" he has sometimes to ask himself, when he finds them making havoc of their speeches, missing their cues, and leading him a sort of steeple-chase through the book of the play. It is the golden rule of the player who is "stuck"—at a loss for words—to "come to Hecuba,"

or pass to some portion of his duty which he happens to bear in recollection. "What's the use of bothering about a handful of words?" demanded a veteran stroller. "I never stick. I always say something and get on, and no one has hissed me yet!" It was probably this performer, who, during his impersonation of Macbeth, finding himself at a loss as to the text soon after the commencement of his second scene with Lady Macbeth, coolly observed: "Let us retire, dearest chuck, and con this matter over in a more sequestered spot, far from the busy haunts of men. Here the walls and doors are spies, and our every word is echoed far and near. Come, then, let's away! False heart must hide, you know, what false heart dare not show." A prompter could be of little service to a gentleman so fertile in resources. He may be left to pair off with that provincial Montano who modernised his speech in reference to Cassio:

And 'tis great pity that the noble Moor
Should hazard such a place as his own second
With one of an ingraft infirmity.
It were an honest action to say
So to the Moor—

into "It's a pity, don't you think, that Othello should place such a man in such an office. Hadn't we better tell him so, sir?"

In small provincial or strolling companies it often becomes expedient to press every member of the establishment into the service of the

stage. We read of a useful property-man and scene-shifter who was occasionally required to fill small parts in the performance, such, for instance, as "the cream-faced loon" in "Macbeth," and who thus explained his system of representation, admitting that from his other occupations he could rarely commit perfectly to memory the words he was required to utter. "I tell you how I manage. I invariably contrives to get a reg'lar knowledge of the natur' of the *char-ac-ter*, and ginnerally gives the haudience words as near like the truth as need be. I seldom or never puts any of you out, and takes as much pains as anybody can expect for two-and-six a week extra, which is all I gets for doing such-like parts as mine. I finds Shakespeare's parts worse to get into my head nor any other; he goes in and out so to tell a thing. I should like to know how I was to say all that rigmarole about the wood coming; and I'm sure my telling Macbeth as Birnam Wood was a-walking three miles off the castle, did very well. But some gentlemen is sadly pertickler, and never considers circumstances!"

Such players as this provoke the despair of prompters, who must often be tempted to close their books altogether. It would almost seem that there are some performers whom it is quite vain to prompt: it is safer to let them alone, doing what they list, lest bad should be made worse. Something

of this kind happened once in the case of a certain Marcellus. Hamlet demands of Horatio concerning the ghost of "buried Denmark," "Stayed it long?" Horatio answers, "While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred." Marcellus should add, "Longer, longer." But the Marcellus of this special occasion was mute. "Longer, longer," whispered the prompter. Then out spoke Marcellus, to the consternation of his associates, "Well, say two hundred!" So prosaic a Marcellus is only to be matched by that literal Guildenstern who, when besought by Hamlet to "Play upon this pipe," was so moved by the urgent manner of the tragedian, that he actually made the attempt, seizing the instrument, and evoking from it most eccentric sounds. But this is, perhaps, one of those stories of which the theatre is abundantly possessed, remarkable rather for their comicality than their truthfulness.

It is curious how many of the incidents and details of representation escape the notice of the audience. And here we are referring less to merits than to mischances. Good acting may not always obtain due recognition; but then how often bad acting and accidental deficiencies remain undetected! "We were all terribly out, but the audience did not see it," actors will often candidly admit. Although we in front sometimes see and hear things we should not, some peculiarity of our position

blinds and deafens us too much. Our eyes are beguiled into accepting age for youth, shabbiness for finery, tinsel for splendour. Garrick frankly owned that he had once appeared upon the stage so inebriated as to be scarcely able to articulate, but "his friends endeavoured to stifle or cover this trespass with loud applause," and the majority of the audience did not perceive that anything extraordinary was the matter. What happened to Garrick on that occasion has happened to others of his profession. And our ears do not catch much of what is uttered on the stage. Young, the actor, used to relate that on one occasion, when playing the hero of "The Gamester" to the Mrs. Beverley of Sarah Siddons, he was so overcome by the passion of her acting as to be quite unable to proceed with his part. There was a long pause, during which the prompter several times repeated the words which Beverley should speak. Then "Mrs. Siddons coming up to her fellow-actor, put the tips of her fingers upon his shoulders, and said, in a low voice, 'Mr. Young, recollect yourself.'" Yet probably from the front of the house nothing was seen or heard of this. In the same way the players will sometimes prompt each other through whole scenes, interchange remarks as to necessary adjustments of dress, or instructions as to "business" to be gone through, without exciting the attention of the audience. Kean's pathetic whisper,

"I am dying, speak to them for me," when, playing for the last time, he sank into the arms of his son, was probably not heard across the orchestra.

Mrs. Fanny Kemble, in her "Journal" of her Tour in America, gives an amusing account of a performance of the last scene of "Romeo and Juliet," not as it seemed to the spectators, but as it really was, with the whispered communications of the actors. Romeo, at the words "Quick, let me snatch thee to thy Romeo's arms," pounced upon his playfellow, plucked her up in his arms "like an uncomfortable bundle," and staggered down the stage with her. Juliet whispers, "Oh, you've got me up horridly! That'll never do; let me down! Pray let me down!" But Romeo proceeds, from the acting version of the play, be it understood:

There, breathe a vital spirit on thy lips,
And call thee back, my soul, to life and love!

Juliet continues to whisper: "Pray put me down; you'll certainly throw me down if you don't set me on the ground directly." "In the midst of 'cruel, cursed fate,' his dagger fell out of his dress. I, embracing him tenderly, crammed it back again, because I knew I should want it at the end." The performance thus went on:

ROMEO. Tear not my heart-strings thus!
They break! they crack! Juliet! Juliet!

[Dies.]

JULIET (*to corpse*). Am I smothering you?

CORPSE. Not at all. But could you, do you think, be so kind as to put my wig on again for me? It has fallen off.

JULIET (*to corpse*). I'm afraid I can't, but I'll throw my muslin veil over it. You've broken the phial, haven't you? (*Corpse nodded*).

JULIET (*to corpse*). Where's your dagger?

CORPSE (*to Juliet*). 'Pon my soul I don't know.

The same vivacious writer supplies a corresponding account of the representation of "Venice Preserved," in which, of course, she appeared as Belvidera. "When I went on, I was near tumbling down at the sight of my Jaffier, who looked like the apothecary in 'Romeo and Juliet,' with the addition of some devilish red slashes along his thighs and arms. The first scene passed off well, but, oh! the next, and the next, and the next to that! Whenever he was not glued to my side (and that was seldom), he stood three yards behind me; he did nothing but seize my hand and grapple it so hard that, unless I had knocked him down (which I felt much inclined to try), I could not disengage myself. In the senate scene, when I was entreating for mercy, and struggling, as Otway has it, for my life, he was prancing round the stage in every direction, flourishing his dagger in the air. I wish to Heaven I had got up and run away; it would have been natural, and have served him extremely right. In the parting scene—oh, what a scene it was!—instead of going away from me when he said, 'Farewell for ever!' he stuck to my skirts,

though in the same breath that I adjured him, in the words of my part, not to leave me, I added, aside, 'Get away from me, oh do!' When I exclaimed, 'Not one kiss at parting!' he kept embracing and kissing me like mad, and when I ought to have been pursuing him, and calling after him, 'Leave thy dagger with me!' he hung himself up against the wing, and remained dangling there for five minutes. I was half crazy. I prompted him constantly, and once, after struggling in vain to free myself from him, was obliged, in the middle of my part, to exclaim, 'You hurt me dreadfully, Mr. ——.' He clung to me, cramped me, crumpled me—dreadful! I never experienced anything like this before, and made up my mind that I never would again."

Yet the ludicrous imperfections of this performance passed unnoticed by the audience. The applause seems to have been unbounded, and the Jaffier of the night was even honoured by a special call before the curtain.

There is hardly necessity for further record of the curiosities of stage whispers; but here is a story of a *sotto voce* communication which must have gravely troubled its recipient. A famous Lady Macbeth, "starring" in America, had been accidentally detained on her journey to a remote theatre. She arrived in time only to change her dress rapidly and hurry on the scene. The performers were all strangers to her. At the conclusion of her

first soliloquy, a messenger should enter to announce the coming of King Duncan. But what was her amazement to hear in answer to her demand, "What is your tidings?" not the usual reply, "The king comes here to-night," but the whisper, spoken from behind a Scotch bonnet, upheld to prevent the words reaching the ears of the audience, "Hush! I'm Macbeth. We've cut the messenger out—go on, please!"

Another disconcerted performer must have been the provincial Richard III., to whom the Ratcliffe of the theatre—who ordinarily played harlequin, and could not enter without something of that tripping and twirling gait peculiar to pantomime—brought the information, long before it was due, that "the Duke of Buckingham is taken!" "Not yet, you fool," whispered Richard. "Beg pardon; thought he was," cried Harlequin Ratcliffe, as, carried away by his feelings or the force of habit, he threw what tumblers call "a catherine-wheel," and made a rapid exit.

We conclude with noting a stage whisper of an old-established and yet most mysterious kind. In a book of recent date dealing with theatrical life, we read that the words "John Orderly" uttered by the proprietor of a strolling theatre, behind the scenes, or in the wings of his establishment, constitute a hint to the players to curtail the performances and allow the curtain to fall as soon as may be. Who was "John Orderly," and how comes his name

to be thus used as a watchword? The Life of Edwin the actor, written by (to quote Macaulay) "that filthy and malignant baboon, John Williams, who called himself Anthony Pasquin," and published late in the last century, contains the following passage: "When theatric performers intend to abridge an act or play, they are accustomed to say, we will 'John Audley' it. It originated thus: In the year 1749, Shuter was master of a booth at Bartholomew Fair in West Smithfield, and it was his mode to lengthen the exhibition until a sufficient number of persons were gathered at the door to fill the house. This event was signified by a fellow popping his head in at the gallery door and bellowing out 'John Audley!' as if in an act of inquiry, though the intention was to let Shuter know that a fresh audience were in high expectation below. The consequence of this notification was that the entertainments were instantly concluded, and the gates of the booth thrown open for a new auditory." That "John Audley" should be in time corrupted into "John Orderly," is intelligible enough. We don't look to the showman or the strolling manager for nicety or correctness of pronunciation. But whether such a person as John Audley ever existed, who he was, and what he did, that his name should be handed down in this way, from generation to generation, we are still left inquiring.

CHAPTER XVIII.

STAGE GHOSTS.

THE ghost, as a vehicle of terror, a solvent of dramatic difficulties, and a source of pleasurable excitement to theatrical audiences, seems to have become quite an extinct creature. As Bob Acres said of "damns," ghosts "have had their day;" or perhaps it would be more correct to say, their night. It may be some consolation to them, however, in their present fallen state, to reflect that they were at one time in the enjoyment of an almost boundless prosperity and popularity. For long years they were accounted among the most precious possessions of the stage. Addison writes in the "Spectator": "Among the several artifices which are put in practice by the poets, to fill the minds of the audience with terror, the first place is due to thunder and lightning, which are often made use of at the descending of a god, at the vanishing of a devil, or at the death of a tyrant. I have known a bell introduced

into several tragedies with good effect, and have seen the whole assembly in very great alarm all the while it has been ringing. But there is nothing which delights and terrifies our English theatre so much as a ghost, especially when he appears in a bloody shirt. A spectre has very often saved a play, though he has done nothing but stalked solemnly across the stage, or rose through a cleft in it and sunk again without speaking one word. There may be a proper season for these several terrors, and when they only come in as aids and assistances to the poet, they are not only to be excused but to be applauded."

The reader may be reminded that Shakespeare has evinced a very decided partiality for ghosts. In the "Second Part of King Henry VI.," Bolingbroke the conjurer raises up a spirit. In "Julius Cæsar," Brutus is visited in his tent by the ghost of the murdered Cæsar. In "Hamlet" we have, of course, the ghost of the late king. In "Macbeth" the ghost of Banquo takes his seat at the banquet, and in the caldron scene we are shown apparitions of "an armed head," "a bloody child," "a child crowned, with a tree in his hand," and "eight kings" who pass across the stage, "the last with a glass in his hand." In "Richard III." quite a large army of ghosts present and address themselves alternately to Richard and to Richmond. The ghosts of Prince Edward, Henry VI., Clarence, Rivers,

Grey, and Vaughan, Hastings, the two young Princes, Queen Anne, and Buckingham invoke curses upon the tyrant and blessings upon his opponent. It would be hard to find in the annals of the drama another instance of such an assembly of apparitions present upon the stage at the same time.

In Otway's tragedy of "Venice Preserved," the ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre, which confronted the distracted Belvidera in the last scene, were for a long time very popular apparitions, although in later performances of the play it was thought proper to omit them, and to allow the audience to imagine their presence, or to conclude that Belvidera only fancied that she saw them. Here, however, is the extract from the original play :

BELVIDERA. Ha ! look there !

[The Ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre rise together, both bloody.]

My husband bloody, and his friend too ! Murder !

Who has done this ? Speak to me, thou sad vision ;

[Ghosts sink.]

On these poor trembling knees, I beg it. Vanished !

Here they went down. Oh ! I'll dig, dig the den up.

You shan't delude me thus. Ho ! Jaffier, Jaffier,

Peep up and give me but a look. I have him !

I've got him, father ! Oh, now I'll smuggle him !

My love ! my dear ! my blessing ! help me ! help me !

They have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.

Nay, now they pull so hard. Farewell.

[She dies.]

MAID. She's dead.

Breathless and dead.

This may seem very sad stuff, but it would be unfair to judge Otway's plays by this one extract. "Venice Preserved" is now shelved as an acting drama, but it was formerly received

with extraordinary favour, and is by no means deficient in poetic merit. Campbell, the poet, speaks of it, in his life of Mrs. Siddons, as "a tragedy which so constantly commands the tears of audiences that it would be a work of supererogation for me to extol its tenderness. There may be dramas where human character is depicted with subtler skill—though *Belvidera* might rank among Shakespeare's creations; and '*Venice Preserved*' may not contain, like '*Macbeth*' and '*Lear*,' certain high conceptions which exceed even the power of stage representation—but it is as full as a tragedy can be of all the pathos that is transfusable into action." *Belvidera* was one of Mrs. Siddons' greatest characters. Campbell notes that "until the middle of the last century the ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre used to come in upon the stage, haunting *Belvidera* in her last agonies, which certainly require no aggravation from spectral agency." The play was much condensed for presentment on the stage; but it would not appear that *Belvidera's* dying speech, quoted above, was interfered with. Boaden, in his memoir of the actress, expressly commends Mrs. Siddons' delivery of the passage, "I'll dig, dig the den up!" and the action which accompanied the words.

For a time ghosts had been only incidental to a performance; by-and-by they were to become the main features and attractions of stage representation. Still they had not escaped

ridicule and caricature. Fielding, in his burlesque tragedy of "Tom Thumb," introduced the audience to a scene between King Arthur and the ghost of Gaffer Thumb. The king threatens to kill the ghost, and prepares to execute his threat, when the apparition kindly explains to him, "I am a ghost and am already dead." "Ye stars!" exclaims King Arthur, "'tis well."

In his humorous notes to the published play, Fielding states, with mock gravity: "Of all the particulars in which the modern stage falls short of the ancient, there is none so much to be lamented as the great scarcity of ghosts. Whence this proceeds I will not presume to determine. Some are of opinion that the moderns are unequal to that sublime sort of language which a ghost ought to speak. One says ludicrously that ghosts are out of fashion; another that they are properer for comedy; forgetting, I suppose, that Aristotle hath told us that a ghost is the soul of tragedy," &c. &c. But when, towards the commencement of the present century, melodrama was first brought upon the boards, the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe were being dramatised, and such pieces as "The Tale of Mystery," "The Bleeding Nun," and "The Castle Spectre," were obtaining public favour, it was clear that room was being made for the stage ghost; the way was cleared for it to become the be-all and the end-all of the

performance, the prominent attraction of the evening.

Here is an extract from Lewis's "Castle Spectre," including certain stage directions, by no means the least important part of the play.

Enter HASSAN, hastily.

HASSAN. My lord, all is lost! Percy has surprised the castle, and speeds this way!

OSMOND. Confusion! Then I must be sudden! Aid me, Hassan!

HASSAN and OSMOND force ANGELA from her father, who suddenly disengages himself from MULEY and ALABIC. OSMOND, drawing his sword, rushes upon REGINALD, who is disarmed, and beaten upon his knees; when at the moment that OSMOND lifts his arm to stab him, EVELINA's ghost throws herself between them. OSMOND starts back, and drops his sword.

OSMOND. Horror! What form is this?

ANGELA. Die!

Disengages herself from HASSAN, who springs suddenly forward, and plunges her dagger in OSMOND's bosom, who falls with a loud groan and faints. The ghost vanishes. ANGELA and REGINALD rush into each other's arms.

"The Castle Spectre" enjoyed great success. It was supported by the whole strength of the Drury Lane company, John Kemble appearing as Earl Percy, and Mrs. Jordan as the heroine, and was repeated some fifty nights during its first season.

It may be worth recording that in the course of the play, the great John Kemble was required to execute, not exactly what is now known as a "sensation header," but still a gymnastic feat of some difficulty and danger. Earl Percy has something of the agility of a harlequin about him, and when he obtains

admission into his enemy's castle to rescue Angela, he is required to climb from a sofa up to a Gothic window high above him, and then, alarmed by the approach of his negro sentinels, to fall from the height flat again at full length upon his sofa, and to pretend to be asleep as his guards had previously left him. Kemble is said to have done this "as boldly and suddenly as if he had been shot." When people complimented him upon his unsuspected agility, he would answer, "Nay, gentlemen, Mr. Boaden has exceeded all compliment upon this feat of mine, for he counselled me from Macbeth to 'jump the life to come.'" "It was melancholy," comments Mr. Boaden, recording the success of the play, "to see the abuse of such talents;" and then he adds the remarkable opinion: "It is only in a barn that the Cato of a company should be allowed to risk his neck!"

Against "The Castle Spectre" the critics, of course, raised their voices. Its popularity was viewed with much bitterness and jealousy. "The great run the piece had," writes the reverend author of "The History of the Stage," "is a striking proof that success is a very uncertain criterion of merit. The plot is rendered contemptible by the introduction of the ghost." "I hope it will not be hereafter believed," cried Cooke the actor, "that 'The Castle Spectre' could attract crowded houses when the most sublime productions of

the immortal Shakespeare could be played to empty benches." A dispute arising in the green-room of the theatre between Lewis and Sheridan, Lewis offered to bet all the money which the play had brought that he was in the right. "No," said Sheridan, "I can't afford to bet so much as that; but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you all it's worth." Still, there was no cavilling down the play. The stage ghost was triumphant. He had attained his apogee. "The Castle Spectre" remained a stock piece for years, and has even appeared upon the stage in quite recent times.

Formerly the public had been satisfied with a very prosaic ghost. A substantial figure, with a whitened face, and a streak of red paint on his brow, was thrust through a trap-door, and it was held that all had been done that was necessary in the way of stage illusion. The ghost of Hamlet's father was frequently attired in a suit of real armour borrowed from the Tower. There is a story of a ghost thus heavily accoutred, who, overcome by the weight of his harness, fell down on the stage and rolled towards the foot-lights, the pit raising an alarm lest the poor apparition should indeed be burnt by the fires of the lamps. Barton Booth, the great actor in the time of Queen Anne and George I., is said to have been the first representative of the ghost in "Hamlet" who wore list shoes to deaden the noise of his footsteps as he moved across the

stage. In the poem of "The Actor," by Robert Lloyd, the friend of Churchill, published in 1757, we have an explicit description of the treatment of ghosts then in vogue upon the stage, with special reference to the ghost of "our dear friend" Banquo :

But in stage customs what offends me most
Is the slip-door, and slowly rising ghost.
Tell me—nor count the question too severe—
Why need the dismal powdered forms appear ?
When chilling horrors shake the affrighted king,
And guilt torments him with her scorpion sting,
When keenest feelings at his bosom pull,
And fancy tells him that the seat is full ;
Why need the ghost usurp the monarch's place,
To frighten children with his mealy face ?
The king alone should form the phantom there,
And talk and tremble at the vacant chair.

Further on the poet discourses of the ghosts in "Venice Preserved," of which mention has already been made :

If Belvidera her loved lost deplore,
Why for twin spectres burst the yawning floor ?
When, with disordered starts and horrid cries,
She paints the murdered forms before her eyes,
And still pursues them with a frantic stare,
'Tis pregnant madness brings the visions there.
More instant horror would enforce the scene
If all her shudderings were at shapes unseen.

It may have been due to Lloyd's poem, and to the opinions it expressed and obtained favour for, that years afterwards, when Drury Lane Theatre opened in 1794 with a performance of "Macbeth," the experiment was tried of omitting the appearance of Banquo's ghost, and leaving its presence to be imagined by the spectators. The alteration, however, was not found to be agreeable to the audience.

While granting that Mr. Kemble's fine acting was almost enough to make them believe they really did see the ghost, they preferred that there should be no mistake about the matter, and that Banquo's shade should come on bodily—be distinctly visible. Further, they were able to point to Shakespeare's stage direction: "Enter the ghost of Banquo, and sits in Macbeth's place." Surely there could be no mistake, they argued, as to what the dramatist himself intended. In subsequent performances the old system was restored, and in all modern representations of the tragedy the phantom has not failed to be visible to the spectators. Nevertheless Banquo's ghost remains the *cruz* of stage managers. How to get him on? How to get him off? How to make him look anything like a ghost—respectable, if not awful? How to avoid that distressing titter generally audible among those of the spectators who cannot suppress their sense of the ludicrous even in one of Shakespeare's grandest scenes? Upon a darkened stage a ghost, skilfully attired in vaporous draperies, may be made sufficiently impressive, as in "Hamlet," for instance. The shade of the departed king, if tolerably treated, seldom provokes a smile, even from the most hardened and jocose of spectators. But in "Macbeth" the scene must be well lighted, for the nobles, courtiers, and guests are at high banquet; and the ghost must

appear towards the front of the stage, otherwise Macbeth will be compelled to turn his back upon the public, and his simulated horror will be absolutely thrown away ; if the actor's face cannot be seen, his acting, of necessity, goes for little or nothing. Even in our own days of triumphant stage illusion, it must be owned that the presentment of Banquo's ghost still remains incomplete and unsatisfactory ; but where such adroit managers as Mr. Macready, Mr. Charles Kean, and Mr. Phelps (to name no more) have failed, it seems vain to hope for success. Pictorially, Banquo's ghost has fared better, as all who are acquainted with Mr. Maclise's "Macbeth" will readily acknowledge.

A curious fact in connection with the Banquo of Betterton's time may here be noted. Banquo was represented by an actor named Smith ; the ghost, however, was personated by another actor—Sandford. Why this division of the part between two performers ? Smith was possessed of a handsome face and form, whereas Sandford was of "a low and crooked figure." He was the stage villain of his time, and was famed for his uncomely and malignant aspect ; "the Spagnolet of the stage," Cibber calls him ; but it is certainly strange that he should therefore have enjoyed a prescriptive right to impersonate ghosts.

The attempted omission of Banquo's ghost, however, made it clear that the old substantial

shade emerging from a trap-door in the stage had ceased to satisfy the town. Something more was required. The public were becoming critical about their ghosts. Credit could not be given to the spirits of the theatre if they exceeded a certain consistency. There was a demand for something vaporous and unearthly, gliding, transparent, mysterious. Scenic illusion was acquiring an artistic quality. The old homely, simple processes of the theatre were exploded. The audience would only be deceived upon certain terms. Mr. Boaden, adapting Ann Radcliffe's "Romance of the Forest" to the stage of Covent Garden Theatre, records the anxiety he felt about the proper presentment of its supernatural incidents. The contrivance he hit upon has since become one of the commonplaces of theatrical illusion. It was arranged that the spectre should be seen through a bluish gray gauze, so as to remove the too corporeal effect of a live actor, and convert the moving substance into a gliding essence.

The plan, however, was not carried into effect without considerable difficulty. Mr. Harris, the manager, ordered a night rehearsal of the play, so that the author might judge of the success of the effects introduced. The spectre was to be personated by one Thompson, a portly, jovial actor, whose views as to the treatment of the supernatural upon the stage were of a very primitive kind. He appeared upon the scene

clad in the conventional solid armour of the theatre, with over-all a gray gauze veil, as stiff as buckram, thrown about him. Mr. Boaden describes his horror and astonishment at the misconception. It had been intended that the gauze, stretched on a frame, should cover a portal of the scene, and that the figure of the spectre should be seen dimly through it. But even then the contour of Thompson was found very inappropriate to a phantom. It was necessary to select for the part an actor of a sligher and taller form. At length a representative of the ghost was found in the person of Follet, the clown, "celebrated for his eating of carrots in the pantomimes." Follet readily accepted the part: his height was heroic, he was a skilled posture-maker, he was well versed in the duties of a mime. Still there was a further difficulty. The ghost had to speak—only two words, it is true—he had to utter the words "Perished here!" and, as the clown very frankly admitted: "'Perished here' will be exactly the fate of the author if I'm left to say it." The gallery would recognise the clown's voice, and all seriousness would be over for the evening. It was like the ass in the lion's skin—he would bray, and all would be betrayed. At last it was determined that the part should be divided; Follet should perform the actions of the ghost, while Thompson, in the wings, out of the sight of the audience, should pronounce the important

words. The success of the experiment was signal. Follet, in a closely-fitting suit of dark-gray stuff, made in the shape of armour, faintly visible through the sheet of gauze, flitted across the stage like a shadow, amidst the breathless silence of the house, to be followed presently, on the falling of the curtain, by peal after peal of excited applause.

A humorous story of a stage ghost is told in Raymond's "Life of Elliston," aided by an illustration from the etching needle of George Cruikshank, executed in quite his happiest manner. Dowton the actor, performing a ghost part—to judge from the illustration, it must have been the ghost in "Hamlet," but the teller of the story does not say formally that such was the fact—had, of course, to be lowered in the old-fashioned way through a trap-door in the stage, his face being turned towards the audience. Elliston and De Camp, concealed beneath the stage, had provided themselves with small ratan canes, and as their brother actor slowly and solemnly descended, they applied their sticks sharply and rapidly to the calves of his legs, unprotected by the plate armour that graced his shins. Poor Dowton with difficulty preserved his gravity of countenance, or refrained from the utterance of a yell of agony while in the presence of the audience. His lower limbs, beneath the surface of the stage, frisked and curvetted about "like a horse in Ducrow's arena." His

passage below was maliciously made as deliberate as possible. At length, wholly let down, and completely out of the sight of the audience, he looked round the obscure regions beneath the stage to discover the base perpetrators of the outrage. He was speechless with rage and burning for revenge. Elliston and his companion had of course vanished. Unfortunately, at that moment, Charles Holland, another member of the company, splendidly dressed, appeared in sight. The enraged Dowton, mistaking his man, and believing that Holland's imperturbability of manner was assumed and an evidence of his guilt, seized a mop at that moment at hand immersed in very dirty water, and thrusting it in his face, utterly ruined wig, ruffles, point lace, and every particular of his elaborate attire. In vain Holland protested his innocence and implored for mercy; his cries only stimulated the avenger's exertions, and again and again the saturated mop did desperate execution over the unhappy victim's finery.

Somewhat appeased at last, Dowton stayed his hand; but in the meantime Holland was summoned to appear upon the stage. The play was proceeding—what was to be done? All was confusion. It was not possible for Holland to present himself before the audience in such a plight as he had been reduced to. An apology was made "for the sudden indisposition of Mr. Holland," and the public were

informed that "Mr. De Camp had kindly undertaken to go on for the part." Whether Dowton ever discovered his real persecutors is not stated. The story, indeed, may not be true, or it may be much rouged and burnt-corked, as are so many theatrical anecdotes, to conceal its natural poverty and weakness of constitution. But it is an amusing legend in any case.

Some five-and-twenty years ago the production of the melodrama of "The Corsican Brothers" re-awakened the public interest in the ghosts of the theatre, and the spectre that rose from the stage as from a cellar, and crossing it, gained his full stature gradually as he proceeded, was for some time a great popular favourite, though burlesque dogged his course, and a certain ridicule always attended his exertions. The fidgety musical accompaniment known as "The Ghost Melody" excited much admiration, and moreover the intricate stage machinery involved in the production of the shade of Louis dei Franchi gave additional interest to his appearance. Of later years the modern drama has made scarcely any addition to our stock of stage ghosts. The ingenious invention known as the Spectral Illusion of Messrs. Dircks and Pepper obtained great favour at one time, and awakened some interest upon the subject of theatrical phantoms. But it soon became clear that the public cared for the Illusion and not for the Spectre. They were concerned about the mechanism of the

contrivance, not awed by the supernatural appearances it brought before them. When once you begin to inquire by what process a ghost is produced, it is clear you are not moved by its character as a spectre merely. Puppets lose their power to please when the spectators are bent upon detecting the wires by which they are made to move.

The old melodramatic stage ghost—the spectre of “The Castle Spectre” school of plays—the phantom in a white sheet with a dab of red paint upon its breast, that rose from behind a tomb when a blow was struck upon a gong and a teaspoonful of blue fire was lighted in the wings, probably found its last home in the travelling theatre long known as “Richardson’s.” Expelled from the regular theatre, it became a wanderer upon the face of the earth, appearing at country fairs, and bringing to bear upon remote agricultural populations those terrors that had long since lost all value in the eyes of the townsfolk. It lived to become a thing of scorn. “Richardson’s Ghost” became a byword for a bankrupt phantom—a preposterous spectre that was, in fact, only too thoroughly seen through: not to apply the words too literally. Whether there is still a show calling itself “Richardson’s” (the original Richardson died a quarter of a century ago, and his immediate followers settled in a permanent London theatre long years back), and whether there is yet a phantom

perambulating the country and calling itself "Richardson's Ghost," may be left to the very curious to inquire into and determine. The travelling theatre nowadays has lost its occupation. When the audiences began to travel, the stage could afford to be stationary.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BOOK OF THE PLAY.

MR. THACKERAY has described a memorable performance at the Theatre Royal, Chatteries. Arthur Pendennis and his young friend Harry Foker were among the audience; Lieutenants Rodgers and Podgers, and Cornet Tidmus, of the Dragoons, occupied a private-box. The play was "The Stranger." Bingley, the manager, appeared as the hero of the sombre work; Mrs. Haller was impersonated by Miss Fotheringay. "I think ye'll like Miss Fotheringay in Mrs. Haller, or me name's not Jack Costigan," observed the father of the actress. Bingley, we are told, was great in the character of the Stranger, and wore the tight pantaloons and Hessian boots which stage tradition has duly prescribed as the costume of that doleful personage. "Can't stand you in tights and Hessians, Bingley," young Mr. Foker had previously remarked. He had the stage jewellery on too, selecting "the largest and most

shining rings for himself," and allowing his little finger to quiver out of his cloak, with a sham diamond ring covering the first joint of the finger, and twiddling it in the faces of the pit. It is told of him that he made it a favour to the young men of his company to go on in light-comedy parts with that ring. They flattered him by asking its history. "It had belonged to George Frederick Cooke, who had had it from Mr. Quin, who may have bought it for a shilling." But Bingley fancied the world was fascinated by its glitter.

And he read out of that stage-book—the genuine and old-established "book of the play"—that wonderful volume, "which is not bound like any other book in the world, but is rouged and tawdry like the hero or heroine who holds it; and who holds it as people never do hold books: and points with his finger to a passage, and wags his head ominously at the audience, and then lifts up eyes and finger to the ceiling, professing to derive some intense consolation from the work between which and heaven there is a strong affinity. Any one," proceeds the author of "Pendennis," "who has ever seen one of our great light comedians X. in a chintz dressing-gown, such as nobody ever wore, and representing himself as a young nobleman in his apartments, and whiling away the time with light literature, until his friend Sir Harry shall arrive, or his father shall come down to breakfast—anybody, I say, who has seen the

great X: over a sham book, has indeed had a great pleasure, and an abiding matter for thought."

The Stranger reads from morning to night, as his servant Francis reports of him. When he bestows a purse upon the aged Tobias, that he may be enabled to purchase his only son's discharge from the army, he first sends away Francis with the stage-book, that there may be no witness of the benevolent deed. "Here, take this book, and lay it on my desk," says the Stranger; and the stage direction runs: "Francis goes into the lodge with the book." Bingley, it is stated, marked the page carefully, so that he might continue the perusal of the volume off the stage if he liked. Two acts later, and the Stranger is again to be beheld, "on a seat, reading." But after that he has to put from him his precious book, for the incidents of the drama demand his very serious attention.

Dismissed from the Stranger, however, the stage-book probably reappears in the after-piece. In how many dramatic works figures this useful property—the "book of the play?" Shakespeare has by no means disdained its use. Imogen is discovered reading in her bed in the second act of "Cymbeline." She inquires the hour of the lady in attendance:

Almost midnight, madam.

IMOGEN. I have read three hours, then; mine eyes are weak.
Fold down the leaf where I have left! To bed!

By-and-by, when Iachimo steals from his trunk to "note the chamber," he observes the book, examines it, and proclaims its nature :

She hath been reading late
The tale of Tereus ! here's the leaf turned down
Where Philomel gave up.

Brutus reads within his tent :

Let me see, let me see ; is not the leaf turned down
Where I left reading ? Here it is, I think.
How ill this taper burns ! Ha ! Who comes here ?

And thereupon enters the ghost of Cæsar, and appoints a meeting at Philippi.

In the third act of the "Third Part of King Henry VI.," that monarch enters, "disguised, with a prayer-book." Further on, when a prisoner in the Tower, he is "discovered sitting with a book in his hand, the Lieutenant attending ;" when Gloucester enters, abruptly dismisses the Lieutenant, and forthwith proceeds to the assassination of the king.

But Gloucester himself is by-and-by to have dealings with the "book of the play." In the seventh scene of the third act of "King Richard III.," a stage direction runs : "Enter Gloucester in a gallery above, between two bishops. Whereupon the Lord Mayor, who has come with divers aldermen and citizens, to beseech the duke to accept the crown of England, observes :

See where his grace stands 'tween two clergymen !

Says Buckingham :

Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,
To stay him from the fall of vanity ;
And, see, a book of prayer in his hand ;
True ornaments to know a holy man.

The mayor and citizens departing, Gloucester, in Cibber's acting version of the tragedy, was wont wildly to toss his prayer-book in the air. Here is an apposite note from John Taylor's "Records of my Life," relative to Garrick's method of accomplishing this piece of stage business: "My father, who saw him perform King Richard on the first night of his appearance at Goodman's Fields, told me that the audience were particularly struck with his manner of throwing away the book when the lord mayor and aldermen had retired, as it manifested a spirit totally different from the solemn dignity which characterised the former old school, and which his natural acting wholly overturned."

A certain antiquary, when Kemble first assumed the part of Richard, took objection to the prayer-book he affected to read in this scene. "This book," writes Boaden, "for aught I know the 'Secret History of the Green-Room,' which Kemble took from the property-man before he went on, our exact friend said should have been some illuminated missal. This was somewhat inconsistent, because one would suppose the heart of the antiquary must have grieved to see the actor skirr away

so precious a relic of the dark ages, as if, like Careless, in "The School for Scandal," he would willingly 'knock down the mayor and aldermen.'" It was at this time, probably, that antiquarianism first stirred itself on the subject of scenic decorations. The solitary banner unfurled by Kemble, as Richard, bore a white rose embroidered upon it. "What!" cried the antiquaries, "a king of England battling with invaders and yet not displaying his royal banner!" And remark was made upon the frequent mention of armour that occurs in the later scenes of the play. We have "locked up in steel;" "What! is my beaver easier than it was?" "And all my armour laid into my tent;" "The armourers accomplishing the knights;" "With clink of hammers closing rivets up;" "Your friends up and buckle on their armour." Yet, as Boaden relates, it was no less strange than true, that, in Kemble's time, "excepting the breast-plate and thigh-pieces on Richmond, not one of the *dramatis personæ* has the smallest particle of armour upon him in either army."

There is a stage-book in "King Henry VIII." The Duke of Norfolk, in the second act, "opens a folding-door; the king is discovered sitting and reading pensively." The book of "Prospero" is spoken of, but not seen. In "Hamlet" the stage-book plays an important part. Says Polonius to Ophelia, when he and

Claudius would be "lawful espials" of her meeting with Hamlet :

Read on this book,
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness.

The book is now usually a missal which the lady employs at her orisons. But it is oftentimes—for so stage-management will have it—the identical volume with which Hamlet had entered reading in an earlier act, and which he describes, upon being interrogated by Polonius, as containing, "words, words, words!" and "slanders, sir!" It was John Kemble's way, we are told, to tear out a leaf from the book at this period of the performance, by way of conveying "the stronger impression of Hamlet's wildness." The actor's method of rendering this scene has not been adopted by later representatives of the character. Indeed, a long run of the tragedy, such as happens in these times, would involve serious outlay for stage-books, if so destructive a system were persisted in. Moreover, there is no sort of warrant in the text for tearing a leaf out of the "satirical rogue's" work.

The "book of the play" frequently figures in theatrical anecdote. Wilkinson relates, that when Reddish made his first essay upon the stage, he inserted a paragraph in the newspapers, informing the public that he was "a gentleman of easy fortune." He appeared as Sir John Dorilant, in "The School for Lovers,"

and in the course of his performance threw from him an elegantly-bound book, which he was supposed to have been studying. Observing this, a gentleman in the pit inquired of Macklin, who happened to be present: "Pray, sir, do you think such conduct natural?" "Why, no, sir," Macklin replied, gravely, "not in a Sir John Dorilant, but strictly natural as Mr. Reddish; for, as you know, he has advertised himself as a gentleman of easy fortune." It has been pointed out, however, that the inaccuracy, fatal to so many anecdotes, affects even this one. The book is thrown away in strict accordance with the stage directions of the play; and it is so treated, not by Sir John Dorilant, but by another character named Belmont.

Macklin administered a similar rebuke, while his comedy of "The True-born Irishman" was in rehearsal, to an actor personating one of the characters, and acquitting himself very indifferently. Upon his mispronouncing the name of Lady Kennegad, Macklin stepped up to him and demanded, angrily, "What trade he was of?" The player replied that he was a gentleman. Macklin rejoined: "Stick to that, sir! stick to that; for you will never be an actor."

In Farquhar's comedy of "The Inconstant," when Bizarre is first addressed by Mirabel and Duretête, Miss Farren, playing Bizarre, held a book in her hand, which she affected to have

been reading before she spoke. Mrs. Jordan, we are told, who afterwards assumed the character, declined to make use of the stage-book, and dispensed with it altogether. She sat perfectly still, affecting to be lost in thought. Then, before speaking, she took a pinch of snuff! Half a century ago a heroine who indulged in snuff was deemed no more objectionable than is one of our modern heroes of the stage, who cannot forego cigars or cigarettes.

There is a stage-book to be seen in "The School for Scandal." Joseph Surface affects to pore over its pages immediately after he has secreted Lady Teazle behind the screen, and while Sir Peter is on the stairs. "Ever improving himself," notes Sir Peter, and then taps the reader on the shoulder. Joseph starts. "I have been dozing over a stupid book," he says; and the stage direction bids him "gape, and throw down the book." And many volumes are needed in "The Rivals." Miss Languish's maid Lucy returns after having traversed half the town, and visited all the circulating libraries in Bath. She has failed to obtain "The Reward of Constancy;" "The Fatal Connexion;" "The Mistakes of the Heart;" "The Delicate Distress, or the Memoirs of Lady Woodford." But she has secured, as she says, "taking the books from under her cloak, and from her pockets, 'The Gordian Knot' and 'Peregrine Pickle.'" Here are 'The Tears of Sensibility' and 'Humphrey Clinker.'

This, 'The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality,' written by herself; and here the second volume of 'The Sentimental Journey.' "

LYDIA. Heigh-ho! What are those books by the glass?

LUCY. The great one is only "The Whole Duty of Man," where I press a few blonds, ma'am.

LYDIA. Very well; give me the sal volatile.

LUCY. Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?

LYDIA. My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!

LUCY. Oh, the drops! Here, ma'am.

Presently the approach of Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony Absolute is announced. Cries Lydia: "Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick. Fling 'Peregrine Pickle' under the toilet; throw 'Roderick Random' into the closet; put 'The Innocent Adultery' into 'The Whole Duty of Man'; thrust 'Lord Aimworth' under the sofa; cram 'Ovid' behind the bolster; there, put 'The Man of Feeling' into your pocket—so, so—now lay 'Mrs. Chapone' in sight, and leave 'Fordyce's Sermons' open on the table."

LUCY. O, burn it, ma'am! The hairdresser has torn away as far as "Proper Pride."

LYDIA. Never mind; open at "Sobriety." Fling me "Lord Chesterfield's Letters." Now for 'em!

It will be perceived that the property-master of the theatre is here required to produce quite a library of stage-books. Does he buy them by the dozen, from the nearest book-stall—out of that trunk full of miscellaneous volumes, boldly labelled, "All these at fourpence?" And does he then re-cover them with

the bright blue or scarlet that is so dear to him, daubing them here and there with his indispensable Dutch metal? Of course their contents can matter little. Like all the other things of the theatre, they are not what they pretend to be; nor what they would have the audience think them. The "book of the play" is something of a mystery. Let us take for granted, however, that it is rarely interesting to the reader, that it is not one of those volumes which, when once taken up, cannot again be laid down—which thrill, enchain, and absorb. For otherwise what might happen? When some necessary question of the play had to be considered, the actor, over-occupied with the volume in his hand, fairly tied and bound by its chain of interest, might forget his part—the book might ruin the play. Of course such an accident could not be permitted. The stage-book is bound to be a dull book, however much it may seem to entertain Brutus and Henry, the Stranger and Bizarre, Hamlet and Joseph Surface, Imogen and Lydia Languish. It is, in truth, a book for all stage-readers. Now it is a prayer-book—as in the case of Richard III.; and now, in "The Hunchback," it is "Ovid's Art of Love." According to the prompt-book of the play, Modus is to enter "with a neatly-bound book."

HELEN. What is the book?

MODUS. 'Tis "Ovid's Art of Love."

HELEN. That Ovid was a fool.

MODUS. In what?

HELEN. In that

To call that thing an art which art is none.

She strikes the book from his hand, and reproves him for reading in presence of a lady.

MODUS. Right you say,
And well you served me, cousin, so to strike
The volume from my hand. I own my fault :
So please you—may I pick it up again ?
I'll put it in my pocket !

It is the misfortune of the "book of the play" to be much maltreated by the *dramatis personæ*. It is now flung away, now torn, now struck to earth ; the property-master, it may be, watching its fate from the side-wings—anxious not so much because of its contents or intrinsic value, as on account of the gaudy cover his art has supplied it with, and the pains he must take to repair any injuries it may receive in the course of performance.

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